

Keys Over the Christian World

*Evidence for Papal Authority [33 A.D.- 800 A.D.]
from Ancient Latin, Greek, Chaldean, Syriac,
Armenian, Coptic and Ethiopian documents*

SCOTT BUTLER
JOHN COLLORAFI

Acknowledgments

To Father Krikor Maksoudian, for his manifold assistance in our research on ancient Armenian documents, and for sharing with us his seemingly encyclopedic knowledge.

To Professor Abraham Terian of St. Nerses' Seminary, New York, for his translations of numerous Armenian documents.

To Linda Hasper, interlibrary loan clerk of the Chula Vista Public Library, for her exceptional help in procuring innumerable books and research materials.

To Sandra Scholey, senior circulation assistant of the Chula Vista Public Library, for her courtesy, cheerfulness and professionalism.

To the Chula Vista Public Library, which did an amazing job in answering our endless requests for inter-library loans.

To the staff of Geisel Library at the University of California at San Diego, La Jolla, California, for its assistance and courtesy in providing numerous books and documents.

To Father Constantine Belisarius, S.J., whose eloquent lines grace the introduction to this book.

To Alan Ziman, immediate past president of Congregation Beth Israel Synagogue, who practically gave us the house across the street from his place of business, (Sid's Carpet Barn, National City, California), without which our research hardly could have proceeded.

To Michael Fontecchio, without whose technical expertise, this work would still be unpublished.

Copyright © 2003 by Scott Butler and John Collorafi
PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Introduction

I am very honored to have been asked to write an introduction to Scott Butler and John Collorafi's book on the power of the keys in the first nine centuries of the Church. Scott and John have done an impressive job of gathering innumerable bits and pieces of the Church's appreciation of the place and role of Peter, and his successors the Roman pontiffs, in basic Christian belief and practice in the first millenium. In a very real sense the honeymoon of ignorance is over. As this book and its message gain more and more diffusion throughout the world, those who do not share the conviction of the first millenium Church will be brought into a confrontation with that conviction, and its importance for a genuine profession of any truly Christian faith.

Jesus of Nazareth was not just a Galilean peasant carpenter of the Roman occupied territory of Galilee. He is the eternal Word of God, the incarnate second Person of the Holy Trinity, son of Mary the Virgin, who chose to come into this world as the Lamb of God. He implemented His own divine plan in founding His own society, His own family, His own priesthood, and His kingdom, which we call the Church. When He expresses His will that something be done, the wise listen and obey.

When I was a child of ten, from a background of at least fourteen generations of alienation from the Catholic Church, it was crystal clear to me from the Sacred Scriptures that Our Lord Himself had founded a Church. Thus whatever group claimed to be the true Church of Jesus Christ, the genuine article, must be able to trace itself credibly all the way back to the Lord Jesus Christ.

However, our Lord does not leave the accreditation or certification of His Church to a tenuous connection with the first Christian community at Jerusalem. He explicitly says that He will found His Church upon Simon bar Jonah whom He renames *Kepha* or Rock in Aramaic, which translates

into Greek as the personal masculine name *Petros* taken from the feminine noun *Petra* or rock, a name translated into English as... *Peter*. These facts are further clarified by the threefold Johannine commission to Peter to feed, rule and pasture His lambs and sheep.

Our Lord further says that the gates of hell will not prevail upon that Rock upon which His Church is founded. Peter of Capharnaum, Simon bar Jonah the fisherman, is [after Christ Himself] the foundation of the genuine Church of Jesus the Messiah.

We confess readily that our times appear to be one of those eras when the gates of hell *seem* to be close to prevailing. No matter. Christ is God; He says that they will not prevail. The ark of salvation is still the barque of Peter, no matter how tempest tossed; it is still the boat into which the Lord Jesus has stepped and from which He teaches. Yet at times the storms rage and He seems to be peacefully, even blissfully asleep in the stern of the boat. "O ye of little faith!"

Can things really be *that simple*? I believe that they can. The Gospel and the proclamation of it are for the simple. "I praise thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hidden these things from the wise and the prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones. Yes, Father, for so it has pleased thee to do." [Mt. 11: 25]

In 67 A.D. Rome was consecrated by the shedding of the blood of the two princes of the apostles, Peter and Paul, who stand like two great pillars upholding the Apostolic See. She was further consecrated by the shedding of the blood of thousands of holy martyrs, among them not a few of the first thirty-three successors of St. Peter. The blood of consecration was that of witnesses to the kingship of Him who deigned to make this eternal city the city of His Vicar. This Vicar is not a soldier, a general or an emperor, but a priest.

Scott and John have gone to the sources of that Christian faith and practice set down in the sacred books of liturgy and the sanctoral cycle of each particular church of the Church Universal, and even of the churches

separated from the *Catholica* or Catholic Church before 1054. They have searched and translated the liturgical and hagiographical records exhaustively to find out what the churches themselves have liturgically confessed and commemorated in the lives of their saints— those they consider closest to God— concerning St. Peter and his office, and Rome and the popes.

The *Menaion* [*Menaia* in the plural] which they occasionally mention is actually a set of twelve books, one per month, containing liturgical offices of the Byzantine tradition for each day of the month. The *Menaia* set forth the changing parts of the offices of prayer for feasts of our Lord, our Lady and the saints, recounting in poetry many times what the Church celebrates in them and remembers about them. In these books we see set out in full panoply the rule *lex orandi, lex credendi*— what the Church believes she prays, and the law of believing is the law of praying. Closely related to the *Menaia* are the *Synaxaria* and *Menologia*, which contain commemorations and brief lives of the saints for each day.

The papacy, in a certain sense, is like an incarnation of the will of God that confronts us in our intellects and in our wills with the truth about Christ and His Church, and their implications in our lives here and now. The present volume is a full documentation, from every quarter of the Universal Church of the first eight centuries, of the dogma defined by the twentieth ecumenical council, the first Vatican in 1870, the dogma which the council itself called the “apostolic primacy.”

History bears out what is said in the Gospels, as this book clearly sets out, century after century, pontificate after pontificate. It is God’s clear will that Rome succeed Jerusalem as the center of God’s kingdom on earth, the center of His Church. Rome is the very byword of an empire that comprises nations and betokens universality.

“Thou art the Rock, and upon this Rock I will build my Church and the gates of hell will not prevail over it.”

The papacy is not an institution at the periphery of human affairs, but at the very heart of the history of nations. In the last analysis, our Lord’s

desire is to build civilization itself upon this touchstone of Himself, the Incarnate Word through whom all things have come to be and without which nothing came into being.

– Father Constantine Belisarius.

Abbreviations

Ancient *Church Histories* are cited by book [Roman numerals] and chapter [Arabic numerals], e.g. Eusebius, HEV, 28 = Eusebius, *Church History* Book V, chapter 28. In multi-volume works, volume and page numbers are generally separated by a colon.

AB = *Analecta Bollandiana*, Brussels 1882-.

A.S. = Bollandists, *Acta Sanctorum*, Antwerp 1643-.

CE = *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Robert Appleton Company 1913.

CSCO = *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*, Paris 1903-.

CSEL = *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, Vienna 1866-.

DA = Dulaurier, Edouard. *Récueil des Historiens des Croisades. Documents Arméniens*. Paris, 1869.

DTC = *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*. Paris, Letouzey et Ane, 1903-.

HE = *Historia Ecclesiastica*, or *Church History*.

ICUR = De Rossi, G.B. *Inscriptiones Christianae Urbis Romae Septimo Saeculo Antiquiores*. Rome, 1867-1888.

MGH = Mommsen, Theodor. *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*. Hanover 1826-. Includes several subseries, such as AA or *Auctores Antiquissimi*, Epp. or *Epistolae*, and SRM or *Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum*.

PL = Migne, *Cursus Patrologiae Completus*, Latin Fathers. Paris, 1844-66.

PL Suppl. = Migne, *Patrologiae Latinae Supplementum*, ed. Adalbert Hamman, Garnier Freres, Paris 1958.

PG = Migne, *Cursus Patrologiae Completus*, Greek Fathers. Paris, 1844–66.

PO = R. Graffin & F. Nau, Edd. *Patrologia Orientalis*. Paris 1907–. Original editions and translations of numerous eastern works, especially *synaxaria*, or Lives of the Saints.

REA = *Revue des Etudes Augustiniennes*.

Reg. = Register of epistles, cited by book number in Roman numerals and epistle number in Arabic numerals.

RHS = O’Conor, Charles. *Rerum Hibernicarum Scriptores*. London, 1814.

RSE = *Revue des Sciences Ecclesiastiques*.

SA = P. Batiffol, *Le Siège Apostolique*, Gabalda, Paris 1924.

SLH = *Scriptores Latini Hiberniae*.

SVNC = A. Mai, *Scriptorum Veterum Nova Collectio*. Rome, 1838.

Collections of Papal Letters, Local and Ecumenical Councils

Coustant, Pierre. *Epistolae Romanorum Pontificum*. Paris, 1721. Critical edition of papal letters to 440. Reprinted in Migne, PL, Volumes 8, 13, 20, 50. Both the original edition and the reprint in Migne have been consulted.

Collectio Avellana. Ed. Otto Gunther, CSEL, Vol. 35. Vienna, 1895–1898. A significant source for papal letters and related documents, c. 366–553.

Thiel, Bishop Andreas. *Epistolae Romanorum pontificum genuinae et quae ad eos scriptae sunt a S. Hilario usque ad Pelagium II*, Braunsberg 1867. Critical edition of papal letters, 461–523. Many papal letters have been double-referenced by comparing the critical editions and *Collectio Avellana*.

ACO = Schwartz, Edwardus. *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum*. Berlin 1928–.

Mansi, G.D. *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio*. Florence, 1759–. Texts of the councils in Latin and Greek.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	ii
Introduction	iii
Abbreviations	vii
 Chapter I: The Keys of Caesarea Philippi	 1
<i>A Walk to Caesarea Philippi</i>	1
<i>The Chair of Peter, at Rome and Antioch</i>	2
Chapter II: The Keys In the Catacombs	7
<i>A Saint in Chains</i>	7
<i>A Witness of Apostolic Tradition</i>	9
<i>Apostolic Succession At Rome</i>	11
<i>“Sedition” at Corinth</i>	12
<i>Who Wrote First Clement?</i>	14
<i>The Succession After Clement</i>	14
<i>A Bishop to See a Queen</i>	16
<i>A Debate About Easter</i>	17
<i>The Schism of Hippolytus</i>	19
<i>“Who Does He Think He Is?”</i>	22
<i>A Scholar Accused of Heresy</i>	24
<i>Hippolytus, From Antipope to Martyr</i>	25
<i>Schism at Rome</i>	25
<i>An Accusation Against a Bishop</i>	26
<i>The Bishop Who Would Not Leave</i>	27
<i>The Late Third Century</i>	27
<i>Appendix. Roman Pontiffs as Saints of the East</i>	28
Chapter III: A Saint Against the Keys?	31
<i>A.D. 251: Cyprian’s Treatise on the Unity of the Church</i>	32
<i>The Roman Clergy Intervene</i>	34
<i>Schisms at Rome and Carthage</i>	35
<i>The Dispute About Rebaptism</i>	36
<i>Firmilian to Cyprian: “I am Justly Indignant at... Stephen”</i>	38
<i>“Let there be no innovation!”</i>	40
<i>Why Cyprian Erred</i>	41
Chapter IV: The Keys of Mediation	45
<i>Arian Intrigues</i>	46

<i>New Shepherds at Rome</i>	47
<i>Remarks of Greek Historians</i>	49
<i>The Council of Sardica</i>	50
<i>“The Head, the See of Peter”</i>	53
<i>Pope Liberius and the Onslaught of Heresy</i>	54
<i>At Antioch, the Election of Meletius</i>	56
<i>Eastern Bishops Approach Pope Liberius</i>	57
<i>“One See of Peter,” and the Era of Pope Damasus</i>	58
<i>Rome’s Response to Basil</i>	61
<i>The Westerners, “totally ignorant of what is happening here”?</i>	62
<i>Jerome’s Anxious Letters to Damasus</i>	65
<i>Rome Declares Her Faith to the East</i>	67
<i>A Debate Among Easterners... in the Presence of Damasus</i>	67
<i>The Pope and the Civil Authority</i>	69
<i>The Council of Antioch</i>	70
<i>Flavian to Paulinus: “If you embrace the communion of Damasus...”</i>	72
<i>The Second Ecumenical Council</i>	73
<i>The Decree of Damasus: Rome’s Answer to Canon Three?</i>	75
<i>Ambrose, Rome and the East</i>	76
<i>Damasus, Prince of the Episcopate?</i>	77
<i>At Antioch, the Schism Continues</i>	78
<i>Appendix. The Charges Against Pope Liberius</i>	81
<i>Defenders of Liberius</i>	83
Chapter V: Acts of the Early Popes [366–440]	87
<i>Early Papal Decretals</i>	88
<i>Pope St. Siricius [384–399]</i>	90
<i>The Case of Jovinian</i>	92
<i>Pope Siricius and the East</i>	93
<i>St. Anastasius I [399–401]</i>	93
<i>Jerome’s Challenge: “What faith does Rufinus call his own?”</i>	94
<i>Innocent I [401–417]</i>	95
<i>The Church in Spain</i>	96
<i>The Church in Gaul</i>	96
<i>The Letter to Decentius</i>	97
<i>St. Zosimus I [417–418]</i>	99
<i>Boniface I [418–422]</i>	101
<i>The Appeals Process Abused: the Case of Apiarius</i>	102
<i>Boniface I and the Case of Apiarius</i>	105
<i>The Letter “Optaremus”</i>	106
<i>Celestine I [422–432]</i>	108
<i>At Rome, an Extraordinary Visitor?</i>	109
<i>Appeal of Bachiarius</i>	109
Chapter VI: The Vicariate at Thessalonica	111

<i>Pope Celestine [422-432]</i>	118
<i>Sixtus III [432-440]</i>	119
<i>The Vicariate under Pope Leo the Great</i>	121
<i>The Papal Vicar Rebuked</i>	123
Chapter VII: The Man With The Golden Mouth	125
<i>Pope Innocent Refuses to Condemn Chrysostom</i>	127
<i>In Defense of John Chrysostom</i>	128
<i>Reconciliation with Antioch</i>	130
<i>Pope Innocent and Later Greek Sources</i>	132
Chapter VIII: The Keys Over Heresy and Schism	135
<i>The Council of Arles</i>	136
<i>The Fathers Against the Donatists</i>	137
<i>Augustine Refutes the Donatists</i>	140
<i>The Crisis of Pelagianism</i>	141
<i>The Council of Milevis</i>	143
<i>Pope Innocent Replies to the Africans</i>	144
<i>Augustine: "If you had been willing to hear Blessed Innocent..."</i>	145
<i>A Disturbance in Palestine</i>	146
<i>Zosimus I [417-418]</i>	147
<i>The Heretics Reinstated?</i>	147
<i>The Tractoria of Pope Zosimus</i>	151
<i>Augustine Refutes Julian of Eclanum</i>	153
<i>New outbreaks of Pelagianism</i>	155
<i>The Semi-Pelagian Controversy</i>	155
<i>"Augustine, a man of holy memory..."</i>	157
<i>The Crisis of Caesarea in Mauretania</i>	158
<i>Augustine, Champion of the Faith</i>	159
Chapter IX: The Keys at Ephesus	161
<i>Celestine to Cyril:</i>	
<i>"You Shall Execute This Sentence..."</i>	162
<i>Pope Celestine: "Sentence has been passed against Nestorius..."</i>	163
<i>In Defense of the Faith: John Cassian</i>	164
<i>St. Cyril's Twelve Chapters</i>	165
<i>Celestine to His Legates: "You are to judge their teachings..."</i>	166
<i>"With tears we have... come to this sorrowful sentence"</i>	168
<i>A Rival Council Under John of Antioch</i>	168
<i>"A sentence and decree... which we too have followed"</i>	170
<i>"Celestine, who has entrusted this care to us..."</i>	171
<i>The Council and the Orientals</i>	174
<i>Arnobius and the Apostolic See</i>	175
<i>"When Celestine held the apostolic height..."</i>	176
<i>The Era of Sixtus III</i>	177

<i>A Bizarre Appeal: Eutherius and Helladius</i>	178
<i>The Decree About the Creed</i>	180
<i>Note on Sources</i>	181
Chapter X: Outrage at Ephesus	183
<i>The Tome to Flavian</i>	185
<i>St. Peter Chrysologus: “Listen obediently... to the blessed pope”</i>	186
<i>At Ephesus, the Council Convenes</i>	189
<i>A Protest from Pope Leo</i>	193
<i>Arrival of the Western Rulers</i>	195
<i>An Opportunity for Orthodoxy</i>	197
<i>Preparations for a New Council</i>	198
<i>The Work of Reconciling the Bishops</i>	199
<i>At Constantinople, Marcian Announces a Council</i>	200
<i>Pope Leo’s Letter to the Council</i>	201
Chapter XI: The Keys at Chalcedon	203
<i>Theodoret: “Leo... has restored his episcopate”</i>	204
<i>“Peter has spoken... through Leo”</i>	207
<i>The Condemnation of Dioscorus</i>	208
<i>Dioscorus: “Leo... has stripped him of the episcopate”</i>	210
<i>Christ “showed the truth in the marvelous Leo”</i>	211
<i>The Egyptian Bishops’ Plea: “We will be killed!”</i>	213
<i>The Definition of Faith, and a Skirmish in the Council</i>	215
<i>“Whom do you follow? The most holy Leo, or Dioscorus?”</i>	218
<i>A New Patriarchate</i>	218
<i>Theodoret, Put to the Test</i>	219
<i>The Case of Maximus of Antioch</i>	221
<i>Lucentius: “The Apostolic See ought not to be humiliated...”</i>	221
<i>“This privilege... why do they seek it now?”</i>	223
<i>Doubts in the East: Had Leo Confirmed the Council?</i>	229
<i>Disturbances at Jerusalem</i>	231
<i>Canon 28: “the whole force and confirmation... reserved for the authority of Your Blessedness”</i>	231
<i>Appendix I. Councils, Canons and the Popes.</i>	232
<i>Canon 28 of Chalcedon</i>	234
<i>Remarks of Sixth-Century Byzantine Writers</i>	235
<i>The Slavonic Nomocanon</i>	235
<i>Appendix II. Nestorius, Monophysite Writers, and the Popes</i>	236
<i>“The faithful Leo, head of the priests...”</i>	238
<i>Monophysite Writers</i>	238
<i>Marcian to Dioscorus: “I esteem Pope Leo more than you”</i>	239
<i>Bishops to Pope Leo: “How can Dioscorus do such things...?”</i>	240
Chapter XII: Riots in the Churches	243
<i>The Codex Encyclius</i>	245

<i>The Struggle for Orthodoxy at Alexandria</i>	246
<i>“Acacius, Disturber of the Eastern Church...”</i>	247
<i>A Plan to Unite the Empire?</i>	252
Chapter XIII: The Lockout of Heresy	255
<i>Patriarch Macedonius II: ‘to do nothing without an ecumenical council having as president the bishop of Great Rome’</i>	271
<i>The Formula of Pope Hormisdas</i>	278
Chapter XIV: The Keys Triumphant	285
Chapter XV: The Keys in Exile	299
<i>A Pope in the Royal City</i>	300
<i>At Constantinople, A Flagrant Usurpation of Authority</i>	302
<i>The Conference of 532</i>	304
<i>A Pope Deposes a Patriarch</i>	309
<i>A Pope Thrown to the Wolves</i>	315
<i>The Affair of the Three Chapters</i>	317
<i>An Eloquent Protest</i>	318
<i>Justinian’s Relentless Quest</i>	319
<i>The Fifth Ecumenical Council</i>	324
<i>A Pope on the Defensive</i>	327
Chapter XVI: The Church Besieged	333
<i>Cyrus and His “Success”</i>	334
<i>The Empire Endorses Heresy</i>	337
<i>Stephen of Dora: “That Chair Which Rules and Presides Over All...”</i>	345
<i>“Martin, the thrice-blessed pope”</i>	347
<i>Letters From the African Councils</i>	348
<i>“Our Apostolic and Supreme See”</i>	349
<i>“A Man Burning With Zeal”</i>	350
<i>Dramatic Intervention In the East</i>	351
<i>The Witness of Maximus the Confessor</i>	352
<i>The Keys of Martyrdom: Final Days of Martin and Maximus</i>	353
<i>An Appeal From Crete</i>	356
<i>Subversion at Ravenna</i>	356
<i>Last Days of Maximus the Confessor</i>	357
<i>The Sixth Ecumenical Council</i>	358
<i>The Fourth Session: “Peter has Spoken through Agatho”</i>	359
<i>“Anathema to the New Dioscorus...”</i>	361
<i>“Honorius, who was Pope of Old Rome...”</i>	362
<i>The Logos Prosphonetikos</i>	363
<i>The Tome “Divinely Written by the Supreme Summit of the Apostles”</i>	365
<i>Leo II Replies to Constantine Pogonatus</i>	366
<i>Pope Leo to King Ervig: “We Fill the Place of Blessed Peter...”</i>	368
Chapter XVII: The Popes and Byzantium	371

<i>Revolution at Constantinople</i>	372
<i>War Against the Saints</i>	374
<i>Turmoil at Rome</i>	376
<i>The Second Council of Nicea</i>	377
<i>A Challenge to the Pope: The Council of Frankford</i>	381
<i>Monk Against an Empire?</i>	382
<i>Patriarch Nicephorus Writes to Rome</i>	386
<i>Reconciliation at Constantinople</i>	390
Chapter XVIII: Keys in the West	393
<i>The Pope and the West</i>	397
<i>The Problem of Hilary of Arles</i>	397
<i>The Pope and Africa</i>	401
<i>In Spain, the Menace of Priscillianism</i>	402
<i>The Vicariate at Arles, Again?</i>	404
<i>Consultations from Italy and Gaul</i>	406
<i>Pope St. Simplicius [468-483]</i>	411
<i>Pope St. Symmachus [498-514]</i>	413
<i>John II [533-535]</i>	414
<i>Pope St. Agapetus [535-536]</i>	415
<i>Pope Vigilius and the Vicariate at Arles</i>	416
<i>Pelagius I [556-560]</i>	418
<i>A Law for the West</i>	420
Chapter XIX: The Keys Exalted	423
<i>A Vigorous Protest</i>	425
<i>Two Eastern Appeals, and a Redress of Grievances</i>	427
<i>Pope Gregory and the West: Appeals from Spain</i>	428
<i>The Papal Vicariate in Gaul</i>	429
<i>The Pope and Africa</i>	430
<i>The Vicariate at Justiniana Prima</i>	430
<i>The Pope and Italy</i>	433
<i>The Era After Pope Gregory</i>	436
Chapter XX: Rome, the Celts, and the Anglo-Saxons	437
<i>Gregory the Great and the Christianization of Britain</i>	438
<i>The Pallium, Sign of Roman Communion</i>	439
<i>The Synod of Whitby, 664 A.D.</i>	440
<i>Saint Columban, 'More Catholic than the Pope'?</i>	442
<i>Columban to Boniface IV: 'Say it isn't so!'</i>	443
<i>The Mission of Theodore of Tarsus</i>	445
<i>English Writers and the Primacy</i>	446
<i>The Keys Over Ireland</i>	455
<i>St. Patrick and the Apostolic See</i>	458
<i>Irish Hymns and the Primacy</i>	461
<i>St. Boniface and the Keys Over Germany</i>	462

<i>The Primacy and Western Liturgy</i>	472
<i>The Leonine Sacramentary</i>	474
Chapter XXI: Rome and the Armenian Church	477
<i>Revival of the Catholic Faith in Armenia</i>	488
<i>The Kingdom of Cilicia, and Union with Rome</i>	493
<i>The Kingdom of Cilicia Falls</i>	502
<i>The Modern Era</i>	504
<i>Appendix. St. Peter in Armenian Tradition</i>	511
<i>St. Peter and Armenian Theologians</i>	513
<i>The See of Rome and Armenian Sources</i>	519
<i>Relations with Rome Renewed</i>	524
Chapter XXII: The Primacy and the Syriac Churches	531
<i>Origin of the Jacobites and Melkites</i>	531
<i>The Maronite Patriarchate</i>	532
<i>Origin of East Syriac Christianity</i>	533
<i>The Catholicos of Seleucia-Ctesiphon</i>	535
<i>Appendix. Peter in the Syriac Tradition</i>	545
<i>Saint Ephraem and the Primacy</i>	546
<i>Jacobite Writers</i>	548
<i>Peter in the Syriac Liturgies</i>	549
<i>Peter, the Rock, and Syriac Writers</i>	553
<i>Peter's Fall Does Not Negate His Primacy</i>	557
<i>Peter, the New Moses</i>	560
<i>Peter, "vicar of our Lord" and head of the apostles</i>	560
<i>Peter in West Syrian Liturgy</i>	565
<i>The Roman Church and Syriac Sources</i>	572
<i>Theodore Abuqurra, Witness of Melkite Tradition</i>	574
Chapter XXIII: The Mystery of the Arabic Canons	579
Chapter XXIV: The Person of Simon Peter	594
<i>Why the Lord Rebuked Peter</i>	597
<i>Augustine's Retractation</i>	598
<i>Peter, Foundation of the Church After Christ</i>	599
<i>Peter is the Rock Because Christ is the True Rock</i>	600
<i>Peter, More Eminent than the Rest</i>	602
<i>Peter, the Keybearer</i>	604
<i>Peter, Supreme Shepherd After Christ</i>	605
<i>Peter, Prince of the Apostles</i>	607
<i>Peter, Coryphaeus or Leader of the Apostolic Choir</i>	609
<i>Peter, Foundation of Apostolic Unity</i>	612
<i>Peter in Greek Hymnography</i>	612
<i>Peter and Paul, Coryphaei or Leaders of the Apostles</i>	615
<i>Peter, the New Moses</i>	616
<i>St. John Chrysostom on Peter</i>	617

Peter's Fall 620

Peter, Shepherd of the Shepherds 621

Epilogue: The Keys Till the End of Time 626

Bibliography 628

Chapter I

The Keys of Caesarea Philippi

A Walk to Caesarea Philippi

A little after the middle of his gospel, the evangelist Matthew describes a walk which Jesus took with His disciples. The apostolic band was on its way to Caesarea Philippi, a city with a colossal rock structure which aptly symbolized the dialogue that was about to take place. As they came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asked His disciples a question: “*Whom do men say that the Son of Man is?*” The evangelist continues:

The disciples answered, “Some say John the Baptist, some Elias, and others, Jeremias or one of the prophets.” He said to them, “But whom do *you* say that I am?” And Simon Peter answered and said, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood have not revealed this to thee, but my Father, who is in heaven. And I say unto thee that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I shall build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I shall give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” [Mt. 16, 13-19]

This dialogue of Jesus with His disciples shall be read and discussed as long as a church exists to proclaim His name—that is, until the end of time. Three questions are addressed, explicitly or implicitly, in this brief exchange:

Keys Over the Christian World

1. *Who is Jesus?* He is the Lord, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity who became man for our salvation, the promised Messiah or Christ, the only Savior and Redeemer of the human race.

2. *Who is Simon Peter?* Simon, who first confessed Jesus as the Son of God, is the Rock of the Church— *Kepha* in Aramaic, *Petros* in Greek—who receives the keys of the kingdom, the sign of supreme pastoral authority. By virtue of these keys, Simon Peter is the leader of the apostolic band.

3. *What visible society did Jesus found?* His *ekklesia* or church, which, by the divine assistance, will last until the end of time. Dogmatic theologians speak of this church as the Mystical Body of Christ. In more juridical terms, this church is governed by the apostles and their legitimate successors, the bishops. Among those bishops, the Catholic Church teaches, one is endowed with supreme authority because he holds, by succession, the keys of Simon Peter.

The Chair of Peter, at Rome and Antioch

Notwithstanding his human weakness, a weakness highlighted very clearly in the Gospels, Simon Peter became the worthy leader of the apostolic band. In the Latin Church, St. Peter was called the “prince of the apostles.” Traditionally the Greek Fathers called Peter the *coryphaeus* or *koruphaios*, a term which, according to Liddell and Scott, a standard Greek lexicon, is taken from Attic drama and refers to the leader of the chorus. It means “foremost man, leader, chief.”

Shortly after Pentecost, St. Peter presided over the Church of Antioch for about seven years, but Antioch was not the place of his final apostolic mission. By divine providence, Peter went to Rome and established the church there. Peter was the first bishop of Rome. Because Peter had been the first bishop at Antioch and later at Rome, liturgical tradition speaks of the *Chair of Peter*, at Antioch and at Rome.

Pope Leo the Great [440–461] once recalled how after the miracle of Pentecost, the apostles set out to evangelize the world. Blessed Peter,

“prince of the apostolic order, was destined for the fortress of the Roman Empire, so that the light of truth would spread more effectively throughout the entire body of the world from the very head.” Later on, Peter was joined by Paul, doctor of the Gentiles. The princes of the apostles, not her pagan founders, were the real glory of the city of Rome, St. Leo declared:

For these are the men through whom, O Rome, Christ’s Gospel shone forth unto thee, and thou, who wast mistress of error hast become the disciple of the truth. These are thy holy fathers and true pastors, who prepared thy inclusion into the heavenly kingdoms far better and more happily than those by whose efforts the first foundations of thy walls were placed... It is they who raised thee to this glory so that, as a holy nation, a chosen people, a priestly and royal city, *being made head of the world through the sacred see of Blessed Peter, thou wouldst preside more extensively by divine religion than by earthly domination.* For although thou, aggrandized by many victories, hast broadened the rule of thy empire by land and sea, yet what the work of war has subjected to thee is less than Christian Peace has conquered. [Sermon 82. PL 54, 422–4]

Saints Peter and Paul planted and nurtured the faith at Rome and were martyred on the same day, under Nero. The “traditional” date of their martyrdom is about 67 A.D. In Roman and Byzantine liturgical tradition, their feast is on June 29.

The eastern fathers at times alluded to Peter’s ministry at Antioch and Rome. Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea [c. 325] wrote:

Peter, that *coryphaeus*, after having first founded the church at Antioch, went away to Rome preaching the Gospel, and he also, after [presiding over] the church in Antioch, presided over that of Rome until his death. [*Chronicle*, 44 A.D. PG 19: 539]

If you go to the Vatican, or to the Ostian Way...

Eusebius recorded the tradition that Saints Peter and Paul were martyred in the time of Nero, writing that “in his time Paul was beheaded in Rome itself, and that Peter likewise was crucified...” Eusebius added that “the title of ‘Peter and Paul,’ which is given to the cemeteries there,” confirmed the tradition about the martyrdom of the great apostles. Eusebius mentioned the priest Caius who lived about 200 A.D. Caius had endeavored to refute Proclus, leader of the Montanist sect. Caius defended the Church’s tradition in these words: “But I can point out the trophies of the Apostles, for if you go to the Vatican or to the Ostian Way you will find the trophies of those who founded this Church.” [HE II, 25]

Eusebius also recorded the words of Dionysius, bishop of Corinth, who wrote to Soter, bishop of Rome, about 170 A.D.:

By so great an admonition you bound together the foundations of the Romans and Corinthians by Peter and Paul, for both of them taught together in our Corinth [sic] and were our founders, *and together also taught in Italy in the same place and were martyred at the same time.* [HE II, 25]

John Chrysostom, bishop of Constantinople [c. 400] had been a priest of Antioch. In one homily he remarked that although Antioch had “received” Peter as teacher, she “gave him up” to Rome:

... this is one great advantage of our city [Antioch], that it received the *coryphaeus* of the apostles as its teacher in the beginning. For it was fitting that she who, before the whole world, was first adorned with the name of “Christians,” should receive the first apostle as her shepherd. However, although we received him as teacher, we did not keep him permanently, but *gave him up to royal Rome...* [De Inscr. Act. II, PG 51: 86]

Greek liturgical offices commemorate St. Peter’s episcopate in

Rome. Texts for the feast of St. Peter's chains, on January 16, proclaim:

Supreme foundation of the apostles,
You left all things, following the Master,
Crying out to him, "With thee I shall die,
So as to live the life of the blessed."
And you became the first bishop of Rome,
Foundation and pillar of the most orthodox of cities,
and firmament of the Church of Christ.
And the gates of hell shall not shake it,
As Christ proclaimed. [Ed. J.B. Pitra.
Hymnographie de l'Eglise Grècque, Rome 1867, LVII]

The office of Ss. Peter and Paul, on June 29, has this hymn:

Let the protector of Rome,
Steward of the kingdom,
The rock of faith,
The firm foundation of the Catholic Church,
Be celebrated in sacred songs. [Pitra, CXX]

The priest Caius mentioned the Vatican with reference to the place of Peter's burial. Later on a basilica rose in that area, and on its walls a mosaic bore this inscription: *Summa Petri Sedes*, "The Supreme See of Peter." [SVNC 5: 38]

The evangelist John Mark, a disciple of St. Peter, went to Egypt and founded the Church at Alexandria. St. Mark was the first bishop of Alexandria. According to Catholic doctrine Rome, Alexandria and Antioch were the original patriarchal sees, although only the Bishop of Rome inherits the keys of Peter.

This is a history of those keys and the men who used them. It is a history, and more than a history, an epic without parallel, the pages of which speak of saints and scoundrels, heroism and martyrdom, treachery and betrayal, popes, princes, emperors and ecumenical councils, a constant struggle

Keys Over the Christian World

between good and evil, a drama of cosmic proportions.

The history of which we speak will last until the end of time, and is as old as the saving gospel of Jesus Christ.

Chapter II

The Keys In the Catacombs

A Saint in Chains

Forty years had passed since Peter and Paul were martyred at Rome. The pagans had another prisoner who in dignity yielded to none. His name was Ignatius, third bishop of Antioch, of which St. Peter was the first. [Eusebius, HE III, 36]

Ignatius, also known as *Theophoros*, or “God-bearer,” was being taken to Rome, where he had been condemned to die by being thrown to lions. Prepared to carry out its mission, his grim entourage made its way.

As he went to his death, Ignatius wrote letters of encouragement and exhortation to seven Christian churches, reminding them of the dignity of their calling. When he wrote to the Romans, the saint could hardly find words to express his esteem and reverence for their Church; he practically had to invent new words to express his thoughts. The letter begins:

Ignatius, who is also called Theophorus, to her who has obtained mercy in the greatness of the Most High Father, and of Jesus Christ his only Son; to the Church beloved and enlightened by the will of him who has willed all things which are, according to the love of Jesus Christ, our God, which also presides in the place of the region of the Romans, worthy of God, worthy of honor, worthy of blessing, worthy of praise, worthy of success, worthy in holiness and presiding over the love, having the Name of Christ, [and] the Name of the Father, which also I greet in the name of Jesus Christ...

Keys Over the Christian World

Ignatius describes how he had prayed to be able to meet the Romans face to face. Although he asks for their prayers, he does not wish them to intervene to stop his impending martyrdom: “be not an unseasonable kindness to me,” he implores them. [Romans IV, 1]

With the Romans, Ignatius used the language of supplication. “*Not as Peter and Paul do I command you,*” he wrote. “They were apostles; I am a convict; they were free, I am a slave even now.” [Rom. IV, 3]

The saint hoped that when the Roman Church spoke, she would be heeded. He wrote: “You never envied anyone; you have taught others. *My will is that what you have enjoined, in teaching others, may stand firm.*” [Rom. III, 1]

With his death imminent, Ignatius knew that the church of Antioch was about to be deprived of her shepherd. Accordingly, towards the end of the letter, he expressed one more wish: “Remember in your prayers the Church in Syria which, in my place, has God for her shepherd. *Jesus Christ alone shall act as her bishop, and your love.*” [Rom. IX, 1]

The precise meaning of certain phrases used by Ignatius has been debated by theologians and linguists to this very day. The Greek text describes the Roman Church as *prokathemene tes agapes*, literally “presiding over the love.”

The saint’s final request, “Remember in your prayers the Church in Syria,” also contains significant language. “*Jesus Christ alone shall act as her bishop,*” the saint had written, “*and your love.*” In the Greek text, the verb is *episkopesei*, the verbal form of the noun *episkopos*, meaning “overseer” or bishop. It is as if Ignatius were saying, “In my absence, Jesus Christ alone shall oversee, shall episcopize, shall act as bishop of the Church in Syria— *and your love,*” meaning the Roman Church.

There is nothing more poignant than the last wishes of a dying man. The entire history of the keys, in a certain sense, is like a commentary on the final wishes of Ignatius Theophorus. From the very beginning, the Roman

Church has *presided over the love*. Whenever it was necessary for the good of souls, she has had to *episcopize* or watch over other churches. What she has *enjoined, in teaching*, has stood firm, for the preservation of the life-giving truths of the Christian faith.

A Witness of Apostolic Tradition

Historical information about the early successors of Peter is scarce, but the second century provided a valuable witness: Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons [c. 140–200]. Irenaeus was a disciple of Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, who was a disciple of the apostles. Irenaeus, then, was separated from the apostles by just one generation. As the next best thing to a direct disciple of the apostles, he was well placed to bear witness about apostolic tradition.

Irenaeus firmly opposed the heresy of Gnosticism, and wrote a lengthy work, *Adversus Haereses*, to refute it. Gnostics believed that man was perfected by a sort of secret knowledge— *gnosis*, in Greek. Irenaeus refuted the contention that the apostles had taught any secret *gnosis*. The apostles taught no differently than their successors, the bishops; in fact, Irenaeus remarked, the apostles left to their successors “their own place of teaching authority,” *suum ipsorum locum magisterii*. [*Adv. Haer.* III, 3. PG 7: 848]

In view of this consideration, St. Irenaeus writes that in the Church, it is necessary to obey “...those who have the succession from the apostles, as we have shown, who with the succession of the episcopate have received the sure charism of truth, in accordance with the Father’s good pleasure: as for the rest, who stand aloof from the principal succession... we must consider them suspect, or as heretics, or of bad doctrine...” [*Adv. Haer.* IV, 26]

Instead of listing the succession of bishops in each apostolic church, Irenaeus gave a sort of short cut: the succession in the Roman Church. The saint wrote:

...because it would take too long, in this sort of book, to list the successions of all the Churches, by indicating the

Keys Over the Christian World

apostolic tradition and faith announced to mankind, which has reached our own time through successions of bishops, in the greatest, most ancient church known to all, founded and established at Rome by the two most glorious apostles, Peter and Paul, we confound all who in any way— either for self-pleasing or vainglory, or blindness or evil teaching— gather otherwise than they ought. *For to this church on account of the more powerful principality it is necessary that every church convene, that is the faithful from all sides, in which, always, that which is the tradition from the apostles has been preserved by those who are from all parts.* [PG 7: 848–9]

The meaning of this passage has been sharply disputed by scholars of different religious confessions. Because Irenaeus wrote in Greek, and this text was only preserved in Latin, much of the discussion consists of conjecture about his original words, especially the phrase about the “principality.” In Greek, the root word for “origin” and “principality” is the same: was Irenaeus talking about the more eminent *origin* of the Roman Church, or was he alluding to a greater *authority* on her part?

Barring a major archeological discovery, the original Greek cannot be reconstructed with certainty. The Latin version says, *propter potentioorem principaltatem*, literally “on account of the more powerful principality.” [PG 7, 848–9]

Continuing his train of thought, Irenaeus describes the earliest succession at Rome:

Having founded and built up the church, the blessed apostles entrusted the office of the episcopate to Linus. Paul mentions this Linus in his epistles to Timothy. Anencletus succeeded him. After him, in the third place from the apostles, Clement obtained the episcopate. He both saw the blessed apostles and conversed with them; their preaching was ringing in his ears and their tradition was before his eyes... In the time of this Clement no small dissension arose among

the brethren in Corinth, and the Church in Rome sent a very forceful letter to the Corinthians, urging them to have peace, renewing their faith and announcing the tradition they had recently received from the apostles... Evaristus succeeded this Clement, and Alexander Evaristus, and then Sixtus was established sixth after the apostles. After him came Telesphorus, who gloriously endured martyrdom. Afterwards came Hyginus, Pius, Anicetus, Soter and Eleutherius, twelfth from the apostles who now has obtained the lot of the episcopate. In the same order and the same succession the tradition of the apostles in the Church and the preaching of the truth have come down to us. *And this is a most complete demonstration that it is one and the same life-giving faith which has been preserved in the Church from the apostles to this very day, and handed down in truth.* [PG 7:849-51]

Apostolic Succession At Rome

Eusebius, writing three centuries after Christ, tells us much the same thing as Irenaeus, reporting that “after the martyrdom of Peter and Paul, Linus first obtained the episcopal charge of the church of the Romans.” Like St. Irenaeus, Eusebius identifies him with the Linus mentioned by St. Paul in 2 Tim. 4, 21. [HE III, 2]

The ancient *Poem Against Marcion* describes the succession at Rome:

In this chair, located in the mighty Rome,
Peter first commanded Linus,
who was great, chosen, and approved by the people,
to sit where he himself had sat.
After him Cletus also received the flock of sheep.
His successor was Anacletus, ordained by lot:
Whom Clement followed— well known was he to apostolic men.
After him Evaristus decreed the law blamelessly.
In the sixth place, Alexander commended the flock to Sixtus:

Keys Over the Christian World

Who after his appointed time handed it to Telesphorus;
Excellent was he, and a faithful martyr too...
The Church at Rome waxed strong in piety,
Arranged by Peter, whose successor Hyginus
Received the chair also, in the ninth place.
After him came Pius, whose brother was Hermas,
An angelic pastor, for he spoke words handed down:
And Anicetus in pious order received his lot. [PL 2: 1077-8]

St. Linus was followed by St. Cletus [79-91], or Anacletus. The *Poem* presents “Cletus” and “Anacletus” as two different persons, although in reality they were one and the same.

The next Roman bishop, St. Clement [91?-100?], is one of the most celebrated figures in Christian antiquity. Irenaeus says that Clement knew the apostles and conversed with them. Certain early Fathers depict Clement as the immediate successor of Peter, while others list Linus and Cletus in the succession before Clement.

Rufinus, a Latin historian [c. 400 A.D.], believed that Linus and Cletus were indeed bishops within the lifetime of St. Peter, and held the “care of the episcopate,” while St. Peter fulfilled “the office of the apostleship.” After St. Peter’s death, Rufinus added, St. Clement received “the chair of teaching.” [*Preface to the Clementine Recognitions*. PG 1: 1207-8]

“Sedition” at Corinth

Clement intervened in a dispute in the Church of Corinth about the year 96. Members of the presbyteral college had been unjustly deposed, and the Roman Church, informed of these events, sent a lengthy letter which begins: “The Church of God that sojourns at Rome to the Church of God that sojourns at Corinth...” [Ed. Kirsopp Lake, *The Apostolic Fathers*, Harvard 1959, 1: 8]

The author warns the Corinthians against the sin of disobedience, and gives them this instruction about apostolic succession:

The apostles announced the Gospel to us from the Lord Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ was sent from God. Christ, therefore, was sent from God, and the apostles are from Christ: both of these things proceed in an orderly way by God's will... They preached from district to district, and from city to city, and they appointed their first converts, testing them by the Spirit, to be bishops and deacons of those who were going to believe... Our apostles also knew, through our Lord Jesus Christ, that there would be strife for the title of bishop. For this cause, therefore, since they had received perfect foreknowledge, they appointed those who have been already mentioned, and afterwards added the codicil that if they should fall asleep, other approved men should succeed to their ministry... [I Clement 42, 44, ed. cit., 1: 78-80, 82-84]

The inference is clear: Christ is from God, the Apostles are from Christ, and the bishops and other sacred ministers, and even their successors, are from the apostles. To resist the Church's legitimate ministers, then, is to resist God. Consequently, the letter has a warning for the dissidents:

You therefore, who laid the foundation of the sedition, submit to the presbyters, and receive this rebuke unto repentance, bending the knees of your hearts. Learn to be submissive, putting aside the boastful and the haughty self-confidence of your tongue... Receive our counsel, and there shall be nothing for you to regret... But if some be disobedient to the words spoken by him [Christ] through us, let them know that they will entangle themselves in transgression and no little danger; but we shall be innocent of this sin... you will give us joy and gladness if you are obedient to the things which we have written through the Holy Spirit, and root out the wicked passion of your jealousy... And we have sent faithful and prudent men, who have lived among us without blame from youth to old age, and they will be

witnesses between you and us. We have done this that you may know that our whole care has been and is directed to your speedy attainment of peace. [I Clement 57-59, 63, ed. cit., 1: 106-11, 118-19]

Who Wrote First Clement?

The letter called “First Clement” was written in the name of the Roman Church; Eusebius of Caesarea calls it the letter “of Clement, which is acknowledged by all, which he wrote in the name of the Roman Church to that of the Corinthians.” [HE III, 38] Eusebius also recorded a letter written about 170, from Dionysius, bishop of Corinth to Soter, bishop of Rome. According to Eusebius, Dionysius wrote:

Today we have passed the Lord’s holy day, in which we have read your epistle. From it, whenever we read it, we shall always be able to draw advice, *as also from the former epistle which was written to us through Clement.* [HE IV, 23]

The Succession After Clement

Almost nothing is known for certain about St. Clement’s successors, Ss. Evaristus [100?-109?], Alexander [109?-115], and Sixtus I [115-125]. After St. Sixtus came St. Telesphorus [125-136], who according to Irenaeus died by a “glorious martyrdom,” and St. Hyginus [136??-140??], of whom almost nothing is certain; even his dates are very much an approximation. Irenaeus writes that the heretic Valentinus came to Rome in the time of Hyginus. [PG 7: 852]

The dates of St. Pius I [140??-155??], successor of Hyginus, are not entirely certain. The ancient *Liberian Catalogue* notes that Pius was the brother of Hermas, author of the *Shepherd of Hermas*, a work widely read in the ancient church. [PL 13: 449-50]

During this period, the church had to resolve a challenge to the faith. According to St. Epiphanius, bishop of Salamis in Cyprus [c. 375],

Marcion was the son of the bishop of Sinope in Pontus. Excommunicated by his father for fornication, Marcion went to Rome. Unable to obtain absolution from the Roman Church, Marcion attacked the faith, rejecting the Old Testament. A Gnostic sect was named after him. [*Haer.* 42. PG 41: 695]

St. Pius was followed by Ss. Anicetus [155–166] and Soter [166–174], whose name in Greek means “Savior.” Dionysius, bishop of Corinth, wrote to Soter, thanking him for having sent charitable assistance to the Church of Corinth. Under Soter, then, the Roman Church continued her tradition of charity that had been praised so highly by Ignatius.

St. Soter was followed by Eleutherius [174–189], a deacon of the Roman Church under Anicetus. In the time of Eleutherius a fierce persecution broke out in Gaul, and the confessors of Lyons informed “Father Eleutherius” in a letter brought by Irenaeus, who at that time was still a simple priest. [Eusebius, HE V, 4]

Eleutherius was followed by St. Victor I [189–198], who condemned the heresy of a certain Theodotus, who taught that Jesus Christ was an ordinary man. [Eusebius, HE V, 28]

During this period the Palestinian Christian writer, Hegesippus, was familiar with Hebrew and Syriac and well acquainted with both Jewish and Christian tradition. Hegesippus had travelled extensively, visiting the churches of Corinth and Rome, and had researched the apostolic succession. He wrote, “When I was in Rome, I recovered the list of the succession [“*made a succession*”] up to Anicetus, whose deacon was Eleutherius; Soter succeeded Anicetus, and after him came Eleutherius...” [Eusebius, HE IV, 21]

Two centuries after Hegesippus, St. Epiphanius, a bishop from Cyprus, discussed the apostolic succession at Rome and left this account, erroneously listing Evaristus twice:

The succession of the bishops in Rome has this order: Peter

and Paul, Linus and Cletus, Evaristus, Alexander, Xystus, Telesphorus, Evaristus [sic], Hyginus, Pius, Anicetus... And let nobody be surprised that we go over all these things with such accuracy, for by these things the truth is always manifested... [*Haer.* 27. PG 41: 373]

A Bishop to See a Queen

In 1882 a British traveller named W. Ramsay discovered a Christian inscription at Kelendres, near Synnada of Phrygia Salutaris in Asia Minor. The inscription was dated 216 A.D. Research by Christian archaeologists showed that the inscription corresponded almost exactly to the epitaph of a little known Christian bishop of the second century. That bishop was St. Abercius of Hieropolis in Phrygia. Sometime in the late second century, Abercius had travelled from his episcopal city to Rome, and returned via Syria and Mesopotamia. The inscription describing his travels has been reconstructed as follows:

The citizen of a chosen city, this [monument] I made [while] living, that there I might have in time a resting place of my body, [I] being by name Abercius, the disciple of a holy shepherd who feeds flocks of sheep [both] on mountains and on plains, who has great eyes that see everywhere. For this [shepherd] taught me [that the] book [of life] is worthy of belief. *And to Rome he sent me to contemplate majesty, and to see a queen golden-robed and golden-sandalled;* there also I saw a people bearing a shining mark... [CE 1: 40]

The meaning of this cryptic inscription has occasioned considerable dispute; it has even been questioned whether the inscription is a Christian one at all. The Armenian *Synaxarion* or Book of Saints, however, does commemorate St. Abercius on October 22. This source depicts Abercius as a wonder-worker who drove out demons, destroyed idols and healed the sick. The account even portrays Abercius as being summoned to Rome by the emperor. On his return, St. Abercius visited Mesopotamia, confirmed Christians in the true faith, and opposed the heresy of Marcion. [PO 19: 353 sq.]

A Debate About Easter

In Pope Victor's time, controversy arose about the right day for celebrating Easter. According to Eusebius of Caesarea, the churches of Asia, basing themselves on an ancient custom which they traced back to the apostles Philip and John, celebrated Easter "on the fourteenth day of the moon, (the day on which the Jews were ordered to sacrifice the lamb)," — the fourteenth day of the Hebrew month Nisan. The rest of the Christian world, however, celebrated the Resurrection on Sunday. Eusebius wrote:

Synods and assemblies of bishops convened, and with one mind consigned to writing the ecclesiastical teaching for the faithful everywhere, that the mystery of the resurrection of the Lord from the dead should only be celebrated on the Lord's day [Sunday]... [HE V, 23]

However, the Asian bishops, led by Polycrates of Ephesus, vigorously defended their custom of celebrating Easter on 14 Nisan. Later on, adherents of this practice became known as *quartodecimans*, from the Latin for "fourteenth." Polycrates wrote on behalf of the Asiatics, declaring that he was "not afraid of threats," adding, "we must obey God rather than men." Eusebius continues:

Upon this Victor, who presided at Rome, immediately tried to cut off from the common unity the dioceses of all Asia, together with the adjacent churches, on the ground of heterodoxy, and he indited letters announcing that all the Christians there were absolutely excommunicated. But by no means all were pleased by this, so they issued counter-requests to him to consider the cause of peace and unity and love towards his neighbors. Their words are extant, sharply rebuking Victor. Among them too Irenaeus, writing in the name of the Christians whose leader he was in Gaul, though he recommends that the mystery of the Lord's resurrection be observed only on the Lord's day, yet

nevertheless exhorts Victor suitably and at length not to excommunicate whole churches of God for following a tradition of ancient custom... [HEV, 24]

Irenaeus pointed out that not only did discrepancies exist about the *day* for celebrating Easter, but even about the customs regarding the fast, with some fasting for one day, others fasting for two, and others even longer. Irenaeus also cited the practice of previous authorities within the Roman Church, who, although they had disagreed with the Asiatics, had not taken the drastic step of excommunicating them. Eusebius concluded that Irenaeus, whose name comes from the Greek for ‘peace,’ was aptly named, in view of his efforts to preserve peace between the churches. [HEV, 24]

Eusebius reported that the decree of Victor “did not please all the bishops without exception.” That may be explained by the severity of the decree, which according to Eusebius not only excommunicated the Asiatics, but condemned them as *heterodox* as well.

The Alexandrian Church, however, saw the Easter controversy in a somewhat different perspective. The Coptic *Synaxarion* for 10 Hatur [November 6] includes this notice:

On this day, a great Council met at Rome, at the time when Victor was pope there, and at the time of Demetrius, patriarch of Alexandria [189-232]. This was the cause of the Council... When our father Demetrius was proclaimed [bishop of Alexandria] ...he composed the calculation of the cycle by which the [lenten] fast and the Resurrection are determined... then he sent a copy of it to our father Victor, pope of Rome, one to our father Maximus, patriarch of Antioch [and] one to our father Agapius at Jerusalem. When the letter reached the three sees, our father Victor, pope of Rome, found the one addressed to himself excellent; he read it and it gave him great joy. From among the dioceses of his see, he convoked fourteen bishops from among the learned, and some learned priests. He read them

the calculation; they approved it, accepted it and made many copies, which they sent to other episcopal sees. [PO 3: 275; Arabic version CSCO 78 (*Arab.* 12): 111-112]

St. Anatolius, bishop of Laodicea [c. 270 A.D.] wrote a work called Paschal Canon, a Latin version of which was attributed to the priest Rufinus about 400 A.D. The Paschal Canon, in its account of the original Easter controversy, seems to equate the Roman bishops with the successors of Peter and Paul, remarking:

...even today all the bishops of Asia... were celebrating Easter when it was the fourteenth day of the month [Nisan], *not acquiescing to the authority of some, that is, the successors of Peter and Paul...* Therefore a certain contention arose between some of their successors, namely Victor, bishop of Rome, and Polycrates, who at that time appeared to have the primacy among the bishops of Asia... [PG 10: 217]

A medieval writer, patriarch Michael the Syrian, offered this interpretation of the easter controversy:

At that time, there was a discussion about the day of the Resurrection... Victor of Rome and Irenaeus of Lyons laid down likewise that it was necessary to observe what they had learned from Peter and Paul. However, [Polycrates], bishop of Ephesus, and the bishops of Asia did not consent at all. Victor... excommunicated them and censured them, as not adhering at all to the universal Church. Later, seeing that a serious controversy arose from this, he released them from the interdict... [*Chronicle*, Bk VI, 6. Ed. J. Chabot, 1: 186]

The Schism of Hippolytus

Under St. Victor's successor, Zephyrinus [198-217], disputes about the Trinity came to the forefront and eventually led to a schism at Rome. The

Keys Over the Christian World

Philosophoumena, or *Refutation of all Heresies*, provides much background information about the schism. This early third century work, most of which had been lost for centuries, was rediscovered on a fourteenth century manuscript and published in 1851. Two years later, Ignaz von Dollinger identified the author as Hippolytus, a famous but largely forgotten figure of the third century. [DTC 6: 2490]

The author presents himself as a bishop at Rome about 200 A.D., depicting Zephyrinus as a foolish, greedy individual who “thought that he ruled the church.” The author is even more critical of Callistus, the assistant and future successor of Zephyrinus, calling Callistus a liar, heretic, and all-around evildoer. Hippolytus was convinced that Zephyrinus and Callistus were endorsing the heresy of Sabellius, who had not properly distinguished the three persons in one God. Opponents of Hippolytus fought back by calling him a “ditheist,” a charge that evidently stung Hippolytus. [Bk IX, 1–2]

After the death of Zephyrinus, Hippolytus refused to recognize Callistus [217–222] as bishop of Rome. He accused Callistus of setting up “a school against that of the Church,” and of “telling everyone that their sins were remitted by himself.” He complained that many people “who had been cast out of the Church by our judgment” joined the party of Callistus. He alleged that Callistus had taught that a bishop need not be deposed, even for a deadly sin, and that under Callistus, bishops, priests and deacons who had married two or three times had obtained lots among the clergy. The author even accused Callistus of teaching adultery and murder. [Bk IX, 2]

The writer, who believed that he was the real bishop of Rome, revealed his conception of authority in the opening of the *Philosophoumena*:

...[heresies] none will refute besides the Holy Spirit delivered in the Church, which the Apostles first received, after which they imparted it to those who rightly believed, *of whom we are the successors, sharing the same grace, high priesthood and teaching, being reckoned as guardians of the Church...* [Bk I, 1]

However valuable the information it contains, the *Philosophoumena* cannot be taken seriously in its recriminations against Callistus. It is a partisan document, an indictment where one rival camp makes its case against the other, which is depicted in the darkest terms. *Teaching adultery and murder?* The accusations against Callistus are so excessive that they are practically self-refuting, and according to tradition Hippolytus himself was reconciled with the Church.

At Rome, St. Callistus was followed by St. Urban [222–230], the acts of whose martyrdom call him “the eighteenth vicar after the blessed apostle Peter.” According to these *Acts*, which claim to have been written by notaries of the Roman Church, St. Urban was brought before Almachius, Prefect of Rome, who raged: “*Is this not Urban the seducer, who has already been condemned again and again, whom the Christians made their Pope?*” Blessed Urban answered, “I seduce men so that they leave the way of iniquity, and reach the way of truth.” The *Acts* add that when the pope and clergy were jailed, the Christians bribed the jailer, entered the prison and prostrating themselves on the ground, “asked for a blessing from the supreme bishop,” and “commended themselves to the prayers of the blessed pope.” [A.S. 17: 11]

According to the *Acts*, St. Urban was beaten savagely, and when he refused to offer sacrifice to Diana, was beheaded with his companions and buried on the Appian Way. The Vicar of Rome, Carpasius, had a wife named Marmenia, who with her daughter Lucinia determined to become a Christian. Invoking the deceased pontiff, Marmenia prayed: “O holy and marvelous Pope Urban, I humbly beseech your holiness to beseech Christ on my behalf, that he not permit me to be condemned in my iniquity, and to sink into hell according to what I deserve.” [A.S. 17: 12–14]

St. Urban is also mentioned in the *Acts of St. Cecilia*, whose spouse, Valerianus, had a brother named Tibertius, who had agreed to become a Christian. According to the *Acts*, Valerianus proposed to bring Tibertius for baptism “to the great man Urban, in whom is an angel’s appearance, venerable old age, and the word of truth seasoned with wisdom,” and Tibertius replied, “Are you speaking of Urban, whom Christians call their Pope?” [A.S. 10: 205]

“Who Does He Think He Is?”

Hippolytus was not alone in raising controversies about the Church's power of absolving sinners. Tertullian, the famous lawyer-convert, and first of the Latin Fathers, had strong views on this subject as well. Originally Tertullian had extolled the dignity of Peter, writing:

It was his pleasure to communicate to the most highly esteemed of his disciples, in a peculiar manner, a name drawn from the figures of himself. [Against Marcion IV, 13. PL 2: 387]

Was anything hidden from Peter, who was called the rock on which the Church was to be built, who obtained the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and the power of loosing and binding in heaven and on earth? [*De Praesc.*, 22. PL 2: 34]

For if you think that heaven is still closed, remember that the Lord left here the keys thereof to Peter, and through him to the Church, which keys everyone that is here questioned and confesses, shall carry with him. [*Scorpiace*, X. PL 2: 142]

Tertullian was not unaware of Rome's claim to apostolic origin or authority. In his work *De Praescriptionibus*, he had stressed the authority of apostolic churches, citing among others the churches of Ephesus, Corinth and Thessalonica. The text continued:

If you are near Italy, you have Rome, whence also an authority is at hand for us. *How happy is this church, into which the apostles poured forth their entire doctrine, with their blood...* [Ch. 36. PL 2: 49]

Later on, however, Tertullian joined the Montanists, a sect based on

the prophecies of Priscilla and Maximilla. As a Montanist, Tertullian criticized the alleged laxity of the Church in absolving sinners. In *De Pudicitia*, or “On Modesty,” the feisty African complained:

I hear that an edict has even been put forth, and a peremptory one at that. The supreme pontiff, that is, the bishop of bishops, declares: “I forgive the crimes of adultery and fornication to those who have done penance...” [Ch. 1. PL 2: 980]

Tertullian excoriated the author of the edict as “blessed pope,” and “apostolicus.” [*De Pud.* 13, 21]

Apparently the author of this decree had appealed to the text “*Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church...*” Disallowing this invocation of scriptural authority on the Church’s behalf, Tertullian claimed that the keys were given to Peter *personally*:

I now inquire into your opinion, to see whence you usurp this right for the Church. Do you presume, because the Lord said to Peter, “On this rock I will build my Church, I have given you the keys of the kingdom of heaven,” that the power of binding and loosing has thereby been handed on to you, that is, every church related to Peter? What kind of man are you, subverting and changing what was the manifest intent of the Lord when He conferred this personally on Peter? [*De Pudicitia*, 21. PL 2: 1025]

Who was the author of this decree, which Tertullian called a “peremptory” edict? One view is that he was a Roman pontiff, possibly Zephyrinus [199–217] or Callistus [217–222]. This view could claim support in the language of Tertullian himself: a “peremptory edict” settles an issue once and for all. What other bishop, besides that of Rome, could claim such “peremptory” authority? In this view, Tertullian’s language makes him a sort of witness to the supreme authority of the Roman bishop—a hostile witness, but still a witness. On the other hand, an alternative view would have it that Tertullian was reacting against his own bishop, Agrippinus of Carthage [c. 220].

Whoever he was, the author of this “peremptory” edict seems to have understood the gravity of sin, the need for Christian penance and repentance, and the Church’s right and duty to use the keys for the salvation of souls, supreme law of the Church. In other words, he shows every sign of having been a good shepherd. The abusive language of Tertullian is evidence only of the pharasaism and madness that drove him into heresy. The Church lost Tertullian, but Tertullian lost far more. Tertullian lost the Church.

A Scholar Accused of Heresy

The early third century produced another highly controversial figure: Adamantius, better known as Origen [189–254], of the Church of Alexandria. A priest, catechist, exegete and scripture scholar, Origen was unbelievably prolific: he is said to have written thousands of works during his long career. Many early Fathers were, at one time or another, students of Origen’s works. In spite of that, Origen was accused of doctrinal error.

Two of the principal errors attributed to Origen are the pre-existence of souls, and the *apokatastasis*, or “restoration of all things.” While orthodox Christian doctrine is that God infuses the soul into the body at conception, Origen—it was widely reported—taught that the soul existed before the body, and was, so to speak, imprisoned within the body as a punishment for faults committed in a previous life. The *apokatastasis* is the doctrine that the souls of the damned, and the demons themselves, eventually receive salvation.

The controversy about Origen’s orthodoxy began even in his lifetime. Eusebius of Caesarea, a great admirer of Origen, wrote that Origen defended his orthodoxy in letters to Fabian, bishop of Rome, and to many other rulers of churches. [HEVI, 36]

St. Jerome, who wrote well over a century after these events, intimates that Origen was condemned by Bishop Demetrius of Alexandria, a judgment which was shared by the Roman Church. [Ep. 33. PL 22: 447]

Hippolytus, From Antipope to Martyr

At Rome the schism of Hippolytus ended when Pope Urban's successor, St. Pontian, and Hippolytus were exiled in September 235. Both were condemned to deportation in Sardinia. According to the *Liberian Catalogue*, when he reached the island, Pontian resigned in late November and a successor, Anterus, was ordained in his place. [PL 13: 449-50]

The *Depositio Martyrum* adds that the remains of Hippolytus were buried in the catacomb on the *Via Tiburtina*; the inclusion of Hippolytus with the martyrs suggests that he was reconciled with the Church. St. Pontian, on the other hand, was buried with the other Roman bishops in the cemetery of Callistus. [PL 13: 465] The *Liberian Catalogue* notes that Anterus [235-236], who was ordained after the martyred Pontian, was bishop of Rome for just over a month. He died on January 3, 236. [PL 13: 449-50]

Eusebius relates that as the brethren at Rome met to elect a successor to Pontian, a visitor named Fabian was staying at Rome. As the electors considered various distinguished individuals for the episcopate, suddenly a dove descended upon Fabian's head. "As if moved by the Holy Spirit," Eusebius continues, the people took Fabian and placed him on the episcopal throne. [HE VI, 29]

The ancient *Depositio Martyrum* notes that St. Fabian was martyred in January 250, and was buried in the cemetery of Callistus. [PL 13: 464]

Schism at Rome

After Fabian's death, the chair at Rome was vacant for well over a year. In spring 251, a disputed election was held for a new bishop. The majority voted for the priest Cornelius, but a smaller faction voted for Novatian, a priest who advocated a highly rigorous policy towards the "lapsed," not allowing them reconciliation with the Church. When Novatian procured "ordination" from three inebriated Italian bishops, and sent his new apostles out to replace the legitimate bishops [St. Cyprian, Ep. 55], Cornelius

Keys Over the Christian World

excommunicated Novatian and his supporters, deposed the three bishops who had been duped into ordaining Novatian, and promptly replaced them. [Eusebius, HE VI, 43]

Upholding the claim of Cornelius to be Fabian's legitimate successor, Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, declared that Cornelius had been made bishop "*when the place of Fabian, that is, the place of Peter, and the rank of the priestly chair were vacant...*" In a letter to Rome, Cyprian describes how he had sent a delegation there with instructions to discern the "womb and root of the Catholic Church and adhere to it." [Epp. 48, 55]

St. Cornelius, who according to the *Liberian Catalogue* died in exile at Civita Vecchia, was succeeded by Lucius [253-254], who after about eight months was followed by Stephen I [254-257]. [PL 13, 451-2; Eusebius, HE VII, 2]

In August 257, St. Stephen was followed by Sixtus II [257-258], who occupied the chair at Rome for just over a year, and was then martyred in August 258.

An Accusation Against a Bishop

St. Sixtus II was succeeded by Dionysius [259-268], in whose time a famous incident occurred with the bishop of Alexandria, also named Dionysius. The issue was the doctrine of the Trinity and the Sabellian heresy, which denies that there are really three distinct persons in one God.

Dionysius of Alexandria had written to certain churches of the Pentapolis against the Sabellian heresy, and certain Egyptian Christians forwarded the letter to the other Dionysius, bishop of Rome. The Egyptians accused their archbishop of doctrinal errors about the Trinity. Dionysius of Rome held a council and examined the letter. He found fault with the expression "creature" applied to God the Son, and with the reluctance to apply the term *homoousios*, which means that the Father and the Son are of the same substance, "consubstantial."

Dionysius of Rome wrote to the churches of Egypt, making it clear that God the Son was *homoousios*, of one substance with the Father, and inviting his namesake, Dionysius of Alexandria, to explain himself. Dionysius of Alexandria responded in four books entitled, *Refutation and Defense*. A century later another bishop of Alexandria, Athanasius, alluded to the incident in his work *De Synodis*, writing:

Certain individuals had accused the bishop of Alexandria before the bishop of Rome, for saying that the Son was made, and not one in substance with the Father. The Roman council had been greatly pained, and the bishop of Rome expressed the opinion of them all in a letter to his namesake. As a result, [Dionysius of Alexandria] wrote the book called Refutation and Defense... [PG 26, 769]

The Bishop Who Would Not Leave

Rome also intervened in the affairs of Antioch, whose bishop, Paul of Samosata, denying the distinction of persons in the Trinity, taught that Christ was a man inspired from above by the Holy Spirit. Although Paul was duly condemned by a council, he refused to leave the church at Antioch. Protected by Zenobia, Queen of Palmyra, Paul could not be dislodged. [CE 11: 589]

When Emperor Aurelian took over Antioch in 272, he became involved in the dispute. Aurelian decided that whoever received recognition by letter from the bishop of Rome, and those of Italy, should receive the church. Half a century later Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea, felt that Aurelian's decision had been most just. [HE VII, 30]

The Late Third Century

St. Dionysius I was succeeded by Ss. Felix I [269-274], Eutychian [275-283], and Caius or Gaius [283-296]. In the *Acts of St. Sebastian*, a soldier martyred in the late third century, St. Caius is called "Pope of the City of Rome," "a man of great prudence and great virtue," "venerable pope," "bishop

Keys Over the Christian World

of bishops,” and *divinae legis antistes*, “overseer of the divine law.” [A.S. 2: 275 sq.; A.S. 35, 622–3]

The *Acts of St. Pancratius and Dionysius*, who were martyred in the persecution of Diocletian, mention “a certain Pope of Rome” who “was converting the entire people from the worship of idols, and leading them to the right way and to eternal life.” The Bollandist editors believe that this Pope was St. Caius. [A.S. 14: 21]

St. Caius was succeeded by Marcellinus [296–304], and after a lengthy vacancy, Marcellus [308–309], of whom little is known. St. Marcellus was followed by Eusebius [309–310], in whose honor Pope Damasus [366–384] seems to have written a poem. According to Damasus the laxist party, which saw no need for strict penitential exercises on the part of the lapsed, produced a rival to St. Eusebius named Heraclius. After a few months of sedition, Pope Eusebius was exiled and died in Sicily, in August or September 310. [PL 13: 385–6]

These early successors of Peter had had to take refuge in the catacombs, where they were tracked down like hunted animals. Before long, however, that situation was going to change. The Church was about to receive her liberty. Christianity was about to become the religion of the empire that had once persecuted it so furiously.

Appendix. Roman Pontiffs as Saints of the East

Many of the early Roman bishops were venerated as saints not only in the west but in the east as well. Nicephorus Callistus Xanthopoulos, a Greek historian [c. 1330], remarks that St. Peter, having entrusted “the keys of the Church of the Romans first to Linus, afterwards to Anacletus, and in the third place after them, being near death, to the most wise Clement, departed unto God.” [HE II, 35. PG 145: 845–6]

The Armenian Synaxarion of Patriarch Gregory VII of Anawarza [c. 1300] commemorates St. Linus on 26 Sahmi [November 4], with this notice: “St. Linus became bishop of Rome; he was consecrated by the apostle Peter, to whom he succeeded on the see...” [PO 19: 421]

The Greek Menologion of Emperor Basil Porphyrogenitus commemorates St. Clement as bishop of Rome and “the most wise disciple and successor of the holy apostles” on November 25. [PG 117: 177]

The ninth century Slavonic *Life of Constantine the Philosopher* refers to St. Clement as “martyr and Pope of Rome.” [Tr. F. Dvornik, *Les Legendes de Constantin et de Methode Vues de Byzance*, 2nd ed. 1969, 378]

A seventh century West Syriac menology commemorates “St. Clement, bishop of Rome” on February 15, while the Coptic Synaxarion commemorates “the great St. Clement, pope of Rome,” on 29 Hatur or November 25. [PO 10: 38; PO 3: 359; CSCO 78 (*Arab.* 12): 164]

The Armenian Synaxarion of Gregory VII of Anawarza commemorates St. Clement as “patriarch of Rome” on 16 Tre, or November 24, adding that Clement became “the writer of the orders and canons of the holy apostles... He was consecrated by St. Peter to replace him on the see of Rome.” [PO 16: 107]

There is also a collection of “127 Canons of the Apostles,” extant in Arabic and several other eastern languages, the first page of which says: “These are the canons which our Fathers, the Apostles, established for the institution of the Church, by the hand of Clement...” In their introduction the editors, Jean and Augustin Perier, who present a translation of the Arabic version, also mention Coptic, Ethiopic, Bohairic and Saidic versions. [PO 8: 553, 573 sq.]

Among western sources, St. Eucherius, bishop of Lyons [c. 440], in his *Epistola Paraenetica*, calls St. Clement “successor to the prince of the apostles.” [PL 50: 738]

The Armenian Synaxarion of Gregory VII of Anawarza commemorates St. Soter, or “*Sauterius*,” on 14 Ahekan, or April 21. [PO 21: 328]

Keys Over the Christian World

The Coptic Church commemorates “Fabian, pope of Rome” on 11 Amshir or February 5. An Armenian Synaxarion commemorates Fabian, or “Flabianos, patriarch,” on 4 Avaleats, or August 9. [PO 11: 816; CSCO 78 (*Arab.* 12): 490; PO 21: 860]

The Menologion of Basil Porphyrogenitus includes commemorations of Stephen I [254-257] on August 2, and of Sixtus II [257-258] on August 10. [PG 117: 569, 580]

An Armenian account exists of the “Martyrdom of St. Stephen, patriarch of Rome,” and those who suffered with him. This account describes St. Stephen as worthy of the rights of his see, who became “like Peter, prince of the apostles, in power and martyrdom, being the thirty-first after the apostles...” [AB 1: 470 sq.]

The Coptic Synaxarion includes this notice for 6 Hatur, or November 2:

On this day the holy father Felix [269-274], pope of Rome, fell asleep in the Lord... Stephen [254-257], pope of Rome, conferred the diaconate on him. When Sixtus [257-8] was elected pope of Rome and when he saw the success and merit of this brother, he ordained him priest. When our father Dionysius [259-268], pope of Rome, fell asleep in the Lord... this father was elected pope of Rome and kept the best watch over the flock of the Messiah... [PO 3: 254; CSCO 78 (*Arab.* 12): 100]

Chapter III

A Saint Against the Keys?

The name of Tascius Caecilius Cyprianus may not ring a bell today, but in Christian Africa it has been legendary since the third century. Tascius, better known simply as Cyprian, was one of the most celebrated figures in all of Christian African history.

According to his biographer, the deacon Pontianus, Cyprian, who was born a pagan in Roman Africa early in the third century, became a gifted rhetorician at Carthage, but grew weary of the pagan way of life. Cyprian began to read the Scriptures, and under the influence of a priest named Caecilius, became a Christian. Within the Church, Cyprian's rise was meteoric: not only was he swiftly ordained a priest, but in 248, after the death of Donatus, bishop of Carthage, popular acclamation called Cyprian to the episcopate. [PL 3: 1541–6]

Cyprian was the leader of virtually all of Latin Christian Africa. What was his conception of authority in the Church? Cyprian addressed that question in one of his early letters, writing:

Our Lord, whose precepts we ought to fear and observe, makes arrangement for the office [*honorem*] of a bishop and the order of his Church, when he speaks in the Gospel and says to Peter: "I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church..." Thence, through the changes of times and successions, the ordination of bishops and the nature of the Church flows, so that the Church might be established upon the bishops, and every act of the Church be governed by the same prelates... this is founded on divine law... [Ep. 33. CSEL 3: 566]

Cyprian explained that unity was also essential to the nature of ecclesiastical government. In another letter, he wrote:

They who have departed from the Church do not allow the Church to recall and bring back the lapsed. There is one God, and one Church, and one chair founded by the voice of the Lord upon Peter. Another altar or a new priesthood cannot be established besides the one altar and the one priesthood. Whoever gathers elsewhere, scatters. [Ep. 43. CSEL 3: 594]

A.D. 251: Cyprian's Treatise on the Unity of the Church

Cyprian addressed the nature of church government again in the treatise, *On the Unity of the Catholic Church*. Writing in spring 251, Cyprian vigorously upheld the unity of the Church and her hierarchy. Important variations exist in this treatise. Formerly they were considered to be the result of interpolations in the text, but later scholarship, spearheaded by Fr. Maurice Bevenot and Dom John Chapman, has leaned towards the view that Cyprian himself wrote both versions.

[4] ...The Lord says to Peter, "I say unto thee," he says, "that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I shall build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I shall give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Upon one he builds the Church, and although to all the apostles, after his resurrection, he gives an equal power and says, "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you; receive the Holy Ghost: if ye shall have remitted anyone's sins, they shall be remitted to him: whose ye retain, they are retained," nevertheless, so as to manifest the unity, by his authority, he disposed the source of the unity beginning from one. The other apostles, indeed, were what Peter was, endowed with equal fellowship both of honor and of power, but a

commencement is made from unity, that the Church of Christ may be shown to be one. This one Church also the Holy Ghost in the person of the Lord designates in the Canticle of Canticles and says: "One is my dove, my spotless one; she is the only one of her mother, elect of her that bore her." He who does not hold this unity of the Church, does he believe that he holds the faith? He who opposes and resists the Church, does he trust himself to be in the Church? [PL Suppl. 1: 46-8]

[4] ...The Lord says to Peter, "I say unto thee," he says, "that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I shall build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I shall give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." And again after His resurrection He says to him, "Feed my sheep." Upon that one He builds His Church, and commands him to feed the sheep. And although to all the apostles He gives an equal power, nevertheless He established one chair, and disposed of the origin and nature of the unity by His authority. And they are all pastors, but the flock is shown to be one, which is fed by all the apostles by unanimous consent. He who does not hold this unity of the Church, does he think that he holds the faith? He who deserts the chair of Peter, upon which the Church was founded, does he trust that he is in the Church? [PL Suppl. 1: 45-7]

The text continues:

[5] This unity we must firmly hold and defend, especially we bishops who preside in the Church, so that we may also prove that the episcopate itself is one and undivided. Let no one deceive the brotherhood by a lie; let nobody corrupt the truth of the faith by a faithless prevarication. The episcopate is one, part of which is held

by each one *in solidum*. [PL 4: 516]

In solidum, as E. Giles notes, is a legal phrase denoting the possession of something by several individuals without division. Throughout the treatise, Cyprian continues to insist on the necessity of holding the Church's unity:

[6] He who does not hold to this unity does not hold the law of God, or the faith [in] the Father and the Son, or life or salvation... [8] Who then is so depraved and faithless, who so mad with the furor of discord as to believe that he can tear or dare to tear apart God's unity, the Lord's robe, the Church of Christ? [23] God is one, and Christ is one, and one is His Church, and there is one faith and one people, joined together in the solid unity of the body by the glue of concord... [PL 4: 520–21, 534]

In another letter, Cyprian is more specific about the nature of ecclesiastical unity. An essential aspect of this unity, he writes, is in union with the legitimate bishops, who in turn are in union with each other:

“We believe and are certain that thou art the Son of the living God.” There speaks Peter, upon whom the Church was built... the Church is the people united to the priest, and the flock adhering to its shepherd. Hence you must realize that *the bishop is in the Church, and the Church in the bishop; and if anyone is not with the bishop, he is not in the Church...* The Church which is Catholic and one is not torn or divided, but is indeed connected and joined together by the glue of priests adhering to each other. [Ep. 66. CSEL 3: 732–3]

The Roman Clergy Intervene

After the death of Pope Fabian [236–250], the chair at Rome was vacant for over a year. When Cyprian was criticized for having taken flight during a time of persecution, the Roman clergy gave their opinion about the issue, writing to him:

...it is incumbent upon us, who appear to be put in charge, and to guard the flock in the place of the shepherds; if we be found negligent, it will be said to us, as it was also said to our predecessors, who were so negligent, while they were in charge, that we have not sought what was lost, and did not correct the wanderer... the Lord Himself, fulfilling what had been written in the Law and the Prophets, teaches, saying: "I am the Good Shepherd, who lay down my life for my sheep." ... We are unwilling, therefore, beloved brethren, that you should be found hirelings, but we desire you to be good shepherds, since you are aware that no small danger weighs upon you if you do not exhort our brethren to stand immovable in the faith... And there are other matters which are incumbent upon you. [inter Cypr. Ep. 8. CSEL 3: 486-7]

In another letter the Roman clergy mention Privatus, bishop of Lambaesis. Condemned for various crimes in a council of ninety African bishops, Privatus had sent to Rome a crony named Futurus, who attempted unsuccessfully to obtain a letter of support. Cyprian mentions that Privatus had been sharply condemned by the late [Pope] Fabian of Rome, who had acted together with Donatus, bishop of Carthage. The letter condemning Privatus has been lost. [Cyprian, Epp. 36, 59]

Schisms at Rome and Carthage

When a schism occurred at Rome after the martyrdom of Pope Fabian [236-250], Cyprian had strongly supported Cornelius [251-253] as the legitimate bishop of Rome. In epistle 59 to Cornelius, Cyprian mentions a schism at Carthage, where a laxist faction had ordained a certain Fortunatus as a rival bishop. This faction, which according to Cyprian included men who had sacrificed to idols, or who had bad consciences, had sent a delegation to Rome that included an excommunicated deacon named Felicissimus. Pleased to learn that this delegation had been rebuffed at Rome, but concerned that Cornelius, under pressure, might bend to its threats, Cyprian wrote:

After all this, moreover, with a pseudo-bishop established

for themselves by heretics, they dare to set sail and carry letters from schismatic and profane men *to the chair of Peter, and the principal church whence the unity of the priesthood has arisen. Nor did they consider that they are the same Romans as those whose faith was publicly praised by the Apostle, to whom unbelief cannot have access...* [CSEL 3: 683]

In letter 67 of autumn 254, Cyprian mentioned two Spanish bishops, Basilides and Martial, who were accused of having denied the faith under persecution. After confessing his crime and accepting his demotion to the lay state, Basilides had reneged and appealed to Stephen, bishop of Rome. Stephen accepted the appeal and restored the two bishops. In response, Cyprian declared that Basilides “deceived” Stephen, whose judgment in favor of such obviously unworthy men could not stand, and invoked a decision of Stephen’s predecessor Cornelius, that such unworthy men might be admitted to penance, but not to the honors of the clergy. [CSEL 3: 739-41]

On the other hand, Cyprian solicited Rome’s intervention in the case of Marcian, bishop of Arles, who had embraced the rigorist doctrines of Novatian. Cyprian wrote to Stephen, bishop of Rome:

...it behooves you to write complete letters to our fellow bishops in Gaul, lest they allow the stubborn and proud Marcian, enemy of the divine mercy and of the salvation of the brethren, to insult our college any longer, because he does not yet appear to have been removed by us... *Let letters be sent by you to the province of Arles and the people there, by which, with Marcian removed, another [bishop] may be substituted in his place.* Signify to us by all means who shall have been substituted at Arles, in Marcian’s place... [Ep. 68. CSEL 3: 744-5]

The Dispute About Rebaptism

Cyprian’s theology stresses the notion of unity: unity within each

local church through submission to the lawful bishop, and unity within the episcopal body itself. Cyprian had even described the Church as being united by “*the glue of bishops mutually cleaving to each other.*” [Ep. 66] Outside of this unity, Cyprian solemnly assures us, there is no life or salvation. [*De Unitate*, 6]

What happens, then, when the bishops are seriously divided on a major question of faith or discipline? That occurred about 255. The question was: what should be done when a convert, baptized by heretics, wishes to join the Church? Is the baptism conferred by heretics valid? Or is it a mere simulation of the sacrament, which must be remedied by a new, valid baptism conferred by the Church’s ministers?

Following an opinion very common in Africa and the east, Cyprian declared: “We consider and hold for certain that no one can be baptized outside the Church, for there is one baptism established in the holy Church.” To admit that heretics and schismatics can baptize is to approve their baptism, he reasoned. If a heretic can baptize, he can also give the Holy Spirit. Yet how can that be? “*There is one baptism and one Holy Spirit and one Church, founded by Christ our Lord upon Peter for an origin and principle of unity.*” Heretics are without the Holy Ghost, Cyprian continued, and everything they do is empty, false. [Ep. 70. CSEL 3: 767-70]

In another letter, Cyprian answers an objection to his view: it went contrary to custom, by which converts from heresy were received not with another baptism, but with the imposition of hands. Boldly concluding that custom in this case was wrong, Cyprian declared that it should yield to reason. Even Peter, “*whom the Lord chose first, and on whom He built his Church,*” when contradicted by Paul, did not assume anything arrogantly, or assert his primacy, Cyprian wrote. [Ep. 71. CSEL 3: 772-3]

Was this an oblique reference to Stephen of Rome, who held the contrary position? The Church of Africa confronted the issues in the Council of Carthage, in 256. Cyprian wrote to Stephen, explaining the council’s view that converts baptized by heretics needed to be baptized again, but added: “we force no one, nor do we lay down a law, since each prelate has

Keys Over the Christian World

the right of his free will in the administration of the Church, and will give an account of his actions to the Lord.” [Ep. 72. CSEL 3: 778]

Within the council, Cyprian had used even stronger language:

...no one of us establishes himself as a bishop of bishops, or by tyrannical terror compels his colleagues to the necessity of obedience, since every bishop may use his own judgment, in accordance with his liberty and authority, as he cannot be judged by another, for neither is he able to judge another... [PL 3: 1092]

In letter 74, Cyprian complained that Stephen... “has judged the baptisms of all heretics to be just [sic] and legitimate,” and cited a fragment from Stephen’s decree: “If anyone comes to you from any heresy whatsoever, *let there be no innovation*, but [observe] what has been handed down...” Bewildered, Cyprian concluded that Stephen must consider even the baptism of Marcion and Valentine to be valid. [CSEL 3: 799–800, 805]

Firmilian to Cyprian: “I am Justly Indignant at... Stephen”

Cyprian received some moral support from an eastern bishop, Firmilian of Caesarea, who complained:

I am justly indignant at the foolishness of Stephen, so open and manifest, that *he who so boasts about the place of his episcopate and contends that he holds his succession from Peter, on whom the foundations of the Church were laid*, would introduce many other rocks and build the new edifices of many churches, as he maintains that baptism exists among them. *Stephen, who preaches that he has the chair of Peter by succession, is moved by no zeal against the heretics...* [Cyprian Ep. 75, CSEL 3: 821]

Firmilian accused Stephen of being worse than all the heretics, and of a grave lack of charity, for having refused even to receive a delegation from Africa. [CSEL 3: 826]

The confrontation between Rome and Carthage was extremely serious, but when Stephen died in 257, and was succeeded by Sixtus II [257-258], relations between the churches improved. Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria, wrote conciliatory letters to Rome which explained the concerns of the rebaptizers. [Eusebius, Bk VII]

A year later, in 258, both Sixtus II and Cyprian of Carthage shed their blood for Christ, within a few weeks of each other; St. Cyprian's biographer, the deacon Pontianus, called Sixtus a "good and peaceful bishop." [PL 3: 1553]

A century and a half later, commenting on the controversy, St. Jerome wrote:

Blessed Cyprian... condemning the baptism of heretics, sent [the acts of] an African Council on this matter to Stephen, *who was then bishop of the city of Rome, and the twenty-second from Blessed Peter; but his attempt was in vain.* Eventually the very same bishops, who had laid down with him that heretics were to be rebaptized, returning to the ancient custom, published a new decree. [*Contra Lucif.*, 23. PL 23: 186]

St. Augustine, bishop of Hippo [c. 400], defended the unity of the Church against Donatist schismatics who had invoked the name of Cyprian. "First stay in the Church, to which Cyprian clearly adhered and preached," Augustine retorted, "and then dare to name Cyprian as the author of your teaching." [*Contra Cresconium* I, 31] "What he poured forth against Stephen in his irritation, I will not discuss over again, because it is not necessary," Augustine also wrote. [*De Bapt.* V, 25. PL 43: 194, 489]

Augustine once questioned the genuineness of Cyprian's letters opposing Pope Stephen. Eventually Augustine conceded that the letters were genuine, but added: "I do not accept what Blessed Cyprian thought about baptizing heretics and schismatics, because the Church, for which Blessed Cyprian shed his blood, does not accept this." [*Contra Cresc.* II, 32] In any case, Augustine insisted, Cyprian remained "in catholic unity," and

whatever correction Cyprian needed was compensated by his abundant charity, and the purification of suffering. [*De Bapt.* I, 18. PL 43: 125–6, 465, 490]

The position of the “rebaptizers” was repudiated even by heretics. Patriarch Severus of Antioch, who was excommunicated by Pope St. Symmachus [498–514], wrote:

If you have recourse to what was approved by the men of earlier days, and say that the Holy Spirit must be given through chrism to converts from heresies, inasmuch as the heretics cannot give what they don’t have, *it is time for you to have recourse to the other rule too and say that it is also absolutely necessary for them to be rebaptized, according to the opinion held by Cyprian. But it is very plain that we must follow the more recent precepts of the fathers, and the methods of cure which they introduced for each disease, and not issue commands out of presumption and pride, and lay down a law beyond what seemed to them to be good.* [Ed. E.W. Brooks. *The Sixth Book of the Select Letters...* 2: 314]

“Let there be no innovation!”

The words *nihil innovetur*— “let there be no innovation!” remind us that Stephen had invoked his power not in favor of doctrinal novelty, but to preserve the ancient practice of the Church. Two centuries later, in a work known as the *Commonitorium*, Vincent of Lerins wrote:

Agrippinus of venerable memory, who was once bishop of Carthage, first of all mortals, against the divine Canon, against the rule of the Universal Church, against the opinion of all his fellow priests, against the custom and institutions of the elders, thought that rebaptism ought to be practiced... *Then Pope Stephen of blessed memory, bishop of the Apostolic See, together indeed with the rest of his colleagues but more than the others, resisted, thinking it fitting, I think, that he exceed all the*

rest as much by the devotion of his faith as he did by the authority of his place. What happened in the end? What force was there in the African Council or decree? By God's gift, none. Everything, as if a dream or a story, was trampled upon as if useless, abolished, superseded... [PL 50: 645–6]

Why Cyprian Erred

Pope Stephen's words, as reported in Cyprian's indignant letter, are concise but presuppose many theological truths; it took centuries for Catholic theologians to elaborate them. To understand why Stephen condemned rebaptism, it would be necessary to understand these principles:

1. The distinction between valid and licit administration of the sacraments.

In Catholic theology, a valid sacrament is one that has really been conferred; this occurs whenever the minister observes at least the essential elements of the sacrament. Licit administration of the sacraments, on the other hand, means that all the requirements of Church law are fulfilled when the sacrament is conferred.

2. Baptism can be conferred validly even by heretical and schismatic ministers.

Pope Stephen understood that heretics can validly baptize as long as they retained what was essential to the sacrament—that is, as long as they baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Cyprian, on the other hand, reacted almost as if Pope Stephen had accepted heretics as *licit ministers* of the sacraments: in letter 74, Cyprian had complained that Stephen “judged the baptism of all heretics to be right and lawful.” Nothing could have been farther from the truth: in reality, Stephen, following apostolic tradition, had recognized that baptism by heretics was *valid*. Pope Stephen never called such a baptism “right,” or “lawful.”

3. The reality of the sacramental character.

Catholic theology teaches that the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and holy orders imprint a “character” or indelible mark on the soul. Once these sacraments have been validly conferred, it is a sacrilege to repeat them. Consequently it is a sacrilege to rebaptize, even when the first baptism has been conferred by a heretic.

The Keys Over Cyprian

Although Cyprian is venerated as a saint and martyr in the Catholic Church, the Church did not accept everything he ever wrote. The inconsistencies and even contradictions in his writings fall of their own weight. At the Council of Carthage, in 256, Cyprian had proclaimed that “every bishop has a right to his own opinion,” and “can no more be judged by another than he himself can judge another.”

Did Cyprian *really* believe that? Cyprian had asked the Roman bishop to intervene against Bishop Marcian of Arles, because of Marcian’s Novatianist leanings. What if Marcian had responded that “every bishop has a right to his own opinion,” or that he, Marcian, could “no more be judged by another than he [could] judge another?”

In his treatise *De Unitate*, Cyprian had compared the unity of the Church to that of God Himself, writing:

There is one God, and one Christ, and his Church is one,
and the faith is one, and there is one people joined in solid
unity of the body by the glue of agreement...

The baptismal controversy showed why the Church needed to have this “glue,” or an absurd situation would have resulted. That is obvious if we consider the alternatives in a purely dialectical way:

1. *If Stephen were right.* Pope Stephen had condemned rebaptism as contrary to apostolic tradition, yet without the power of the keys, Stephen would have been unable to enforce his view. Cyprian, and virtually all the Africans, would in effect be administering “double baptism,” with Rome powerless to intervene.

2. *If Cyprian were right.* According to Cyprian, baptism by heretics was invalid—utterly null and void. Yet Stephen as bishop would be refusing, in effect, to give such converts a real baptism. If so, converts from heresy who entered the church under Stephen were receiving no baptism at all.

Yet “every bishop has a right to his own opinion,” Cyprian had proclaimed. Consequently, nobody in the Church could make sure that converts from heresy receive a “real” baptism in Rome.

If all bishops have a right to their own opinion, there would be no way to resolve the baptismal controversy: thus great provinces of the Universal Church must resign themselves either to rebaptism [at Africa], or to no baptism at all for converts [at Rome]. Either way, the Church would be prevented from proclaiming *one faith, one Lord, one baptism*, as the Scripture demands. [Eph. 4, 5]

In reality, nothing of the kind happened. While the Church venerates the holiness of Cyprian, the great African did not have the last word in the dispute about rebaptism.

Cyprian had confronted a power greater than himself. With all his eloquence, all his conviction, all his magnetism and iron rectitude, he had collided, head first, into the power of the keys.

This time, a saint did not prevail.

Chapter IV

The Keys of Mediation

Early in the fourth century, the Egyptian priest Arius began teaching that there was a time when God the Son had not existed. According to Arius, Christ was a created being, and thus not fully divine. Alexander, bishop of Alexandria, condemned Arius and the new teaching, but the controversy continued. Constantine, the first openly Christian emperor, called a council of all the bishops of the *oikumene*, or inhabited world, to meet in 325 at Nicea, in Bithynia—the first ecumenical council. According to Rufinus [c. 400], Constantine had acted in consultation with the bishops. [HE I, 1. PL 21: 467]

The president of the synod was Hosius, bishop of Cordova and a close friend of Constantine. Unable to come to the council due to old age, Pope Silvester I [314–335] sent two Roman priests, Vito and Vincent, to represent him. A medieval Syriac manuscript presents them as signing the conciliar acts “in place of our Pope.” [Pitra, *Analecta Sacra* 4: 459. Regarding Hosius, St. Athanasius asks, “*over what synod did he not preside?*” *Apol. de fuga*, 5. PG 25: 649]

Gelasius, bishop of Cyzicus, who composed a history of the Council of Nicea [c. 475], wrote that “Hosius himself of Spain, distinguished for the celebrity of his name and fame, took the place of Silvester, bishop of great Rome, together with the Roman presbyters Vito and Vincent...” [Bk II, 5. PG 85: 1229]

The council anathematized Arius and defined that the Son of God is *homoousios*, of one substance with the Father; *homoousios* or “consubstantial,” signifies the *equality of nature or substance* between the Father and the Son.

Keys Over the Christian World

St. Silvester, Pope of Rome is venerated in east and west. The Coptic Church commemorates “Silvester, pope of Rome,” who rose to the “apostolic see of Peter,” on 7 Toubeh, or January 2. [PO 11: 552; Arabic version CSCO 78 (*Arab.* 12): 320]

The Greek Church celebrates his feast on the same day, commemorating his “unerring teachings” in these words:

God-bearing Father Silvester, you appeared as a pillar of fire, in sacred fashion leading the sacred college, and as an overshadowing cloud, delivering the faithful from the Egyptian [Arian] error and on every occasion leading them with unerring teachings to divine land... Enriched with the chair of the *coryphaeus* of the apostles... as a most marvelous minister of God... beautifying, strengthening and magnifying the Church with divine teachings, as a light-bearing star, illumining with the light of virtues... You appeared as the *coryphaeus*, and *hieromystes* of the sacred college, and adorned the... throne of the *coryphaeus* of the disciples... As the divine *coryphaeus* you established the most holy dogma, destroying the impious dogmas of heretics... [*Menaion*, Athens 1979, January, 17, 22, 24]

Arian Intrigues

After Nicea the Arians regrouped, intriguing to remove orthodox bishops. Led by the court bishop, Eusebius of Nicomedia, the Arians were also known as the “Eusebians.” Eustathius, bishop of Antioch, was among their first victims. At a council of Antioch in 330, with Eusebius of Nicomedia presiding, trumped-up charges were brought against Eustathius, who was promptly led into exile in Thrace, and finally into Philippi of Macedonia. The Eusebians planted another bishop in the see of Antioch. [Theodoret, HE I, 20-21]

The orthodox at Antioch were divided. Some remained faithful to the exiled Eustathius, and came to be known as “Eustathians.” This party,

led by the priest Paulinus, began holding services in private homes. Another party, led by two laymen, Flavian of Antioch and Diodorus of Tarsus, condemned the exile of Eustathius, but continued relations with the “official” church and bishop. [Theodoret, HE I, 21; Bk II, 19]

In the east, the greatest champion of orthodoxy was Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria. At a council of Tyre in 335, the Eusebians brought various charges against Athanasius, declared him deposed, and intruded a false bishop, Pistus, at Alexandria. The Eusebians wrote to the emperors, stating their “case” against Athanasius, and even to Rome, asking for the recognition of Pistus. [Athanasius, *Apol.*, 71–83. *De Synodis*, 21–22. Festal letters and Chronicle. PG 25: 373 sq. PG 26: 717–20, 1339 sq.]

New Shepherds at Rome

According to the *Liberian Catalogue*, Pope Silvester died on December 31, 335 and his successor, Mark, [January–October, 336], was followed, in late January 337, by Julius I. [PL 13, 453–4]

In the late 330s, the Arians of Egypt sent to Julius a delegation made up of the priest Macarius and the deacons Martyrius and Hesychius, who requested letters of communion for the Arian intruder at Alexandria, Pistus. Certain priests loyal to Athanasius, however, arrived just in time to warn Julius that Pistus was an Arian heretic. An Alexandrian Council sent a lengthy written defense of Athanasius to Julius, who also heard from the Eusebians, who wrote and offered to let him, Julius, be the judge, if he wanted, in the case of Athanasius. [St. Athanasius, *Apol.*, 20, 24]

The Eusebians continued their intrigues. Bishop Paul of Constantinople was deposed by a Eusebian synod in 339, and was led into exile in Singara of Mesopotamia. Marcellus of Ancyra was also deposed, and Eusebius of Nicomedia, ringleader of the heretics, assumed the see of Constantinople. At Alexandria, the intruder Gregory of Cappadocia was installed by soldiers using raw force. Athanasius described the events in a letter to the faithful and left for Rome, where he was joined by other eastern bishops, such as Paul of Constantinople, Asclepas of Gaza, Marcellus of Ancyra

in Galatia, and Lucius of Adrianopolis. [Socrates, HE II, 15; PG 25: 221 sq.]

After examining their cases, Julius received these bishops into communion. He wrote a letter to the Arian eastern bishops, criticizing them for having judged unjustly and for causing disturbances in the Churches. [Sozomen, HE III, 8]

When Julius ordered the Eusebians to come to Rome and render an account for their judgments, they responded by a letter which has not been preserved, although Sozomen, an historian who lived a century later, offered this summary of it:

In the first place, they conceded that the Roman Church was entitled to universal honor, because it was the school of the apostles and the metropolis of piety from the outset. [However], they were critical that Julius appeared to be in communion with the followers of Athanasius; they considered this an insult to their synod, unjust, and contrary to ecclesiastical law... they [the Arians] added that if Julius would accept their condemnation [of Athanasius and his orthodox colleagues], they would have peace and communion with him. If, however, [Julius] resisted them, they would oppose him, since the eastern bishops had not resisted when the West deposed Novatian... [HE III, 8]

The Arian argumentation is based on reciprocity, as if to say: *we easterners accepted it when you westerners deposed Novatian. Why do you not accept our deposition of Athanasius?* After intriguing for over a decade to abolish the decrees of Nicea, the Arians were pleading respect for *eastern* councils. Julius responded in this letter, which Athanasius preserved in the *Apology Against the Arians*:

It behooved you, beloved, to come hither [to Rome], and not to refuse, in order that this business may be terminated, for reason requires this... O beloved! The church's judgments are no longer according to the gospel, but are

unto exile and death. For even if any offenses had been committed by these men, as you say, the judgment ought to have been in accordance with the rule of the church, and not thus. It behooved you to write to all of us, that thus what was just might be decreed by all. For they who suffered were bishops, and the churches that suffered no ordinary ones, which the apostles governed in person. And why were we not written to especially with regard to the church of Alexandria? *Or are you ignorant that this has been the custom, first to write to us, and that thus what is just be decreed from here?* If therefore any such suspicion fell upon the bishop there [at Alexandria], it was befitting to write to this church. But now they who failed to inform us, but did as they wished, proceed to us although unaware of the facts, to become supporters of their views. Not thus were the ordinances of Paul, not thus have the Fathers handed it down to us. This is a new decree, and a new institution. Bear with me, I exhort you, for what I write is for the common good. *For what we have received from the blessed apostle Peter, the same do I manifest to you;* and I would not have written these things to you—deeming them plain to all of you—had not what has been done confounded us. [*Apol.*, 35. PG 25: 305–8]

Remarks of Greek Historians

Generations after the events, eastern historians spoke of the vigorous intervention by St. Julius. A century later, Sozomen wrote:

The bishop of Rome, having examined the case of each one, and finding them all of one mind about the dogma of the Council of Nicea, received them into communion as being of the same faith [as himself]. *And because he had the care of all, owing to the dignity of his see, he restored each one to his church...* [HE III, 8]

Keys Over the Christian World

Marcus Cassiodorus, a Latin historian, included this passage in his *Tripartite History*. [Bk IV, 15. PL 69: 963]

This parallel passage exists from Socrates, another Greek historian:

Each one explained his case to Julius, bishop of Rome, and he, by virtue of the prerogative of the church of Rome, strengthened them with very firm letters and sent them back into the East, restoring to them their sees and reprimanding those who had temerarily deposed them. [HE II, 15]

Sozomen records that Julius criticized the Eusebians for having violated the law of the Church, for having innovated against the Council of Nicea, and for failing to convoke him [Julius] to the council [at Antioch], “because it is a law that actions taken without the consent of the bishop of Rome are invalid.” [HE III, 10]

Socrates also writes that Julius rebuked the Eusebians on the grounds that “it is unlawful to legislate for the churches without the consent of the bishop of Rome” [HE II, 17], a passage reproduced by Cassiodorus. [Bk IV, 19. PL 69: 966]

Theodoret, another Greek historian, writes that when the Eusebians had complained about Athanasius, Julius, “following the law of the Church,” had summoned the divine Athanasius to Rome, for judgment. [HE II, 4] Cassiodorus reproduced this passage as well. [Bk IV, 6. PL 69: 959]

The medieval *Chronicle of Michael the Syrian* notes that Athanasius fled to Rome, was welcomed by Julius, and that the Arian bishop George “sent a scornful letter to Julius for having re-established Athanasius and Paul.” [Bk VII, 4. Ed. J. Chabot, 1: 270]

The Council of Sardica

In 341 there was another council at Antioch, called the Synod “in

the dedication,” because the bishops were to dedicate a recently completed church, construction of which had begun under Constantine. The council was attended by almost a hundred bishops. [Sozomen, HE III, 5]

Canon 4 of this council stipulates that a bishop deposed by a synod, and who continues to function, may no longer hope for reinstatement from another synod, and those who hold communion with him shall be excommunicated. This canon was meant to strip Pope Julius and the West of the right to reexamine the case of Athanasius. Taken literally, the canon would even *excommunicate Julius and the West, merely for continuing in communion with Athanasius*. [Cf. Hefele 2: 68]

Pope Julius, who was not afraid of being excommunicated by heretics, did not abandon Athanasius. Thanks to favorable political circumstances, the westerners met the easterners at the Council of Sardica, in autumn 343. Sardica, which corresponds to Sofia in Bulgaria, was located on the edge between the western and eastern empires. Athanasius was present along with Paul, bishop of Constantinople, and other persecuted orthodox bishops. Disagreements began immediately: the easterners demanded that Athanasius and Paul be excluded. When the orthodox majority refused, the Arian eastern bishops, blaming pope Julius for their problems, left for Philippopolis. [Socrates, HE II, 20]

Meanwhile the orthodox, led by Hosius, went to work. While Athanasius, Paul and other orthodox bishops were restored to their sees, the council condemned their Arian accusers and enacted several disciplinary canons, including these canons about appeals:

Canon 3. Bishop Hosius said: “...if a bishop has had sentence pronounced against him in some case, and thinks he has good reason for the case to be considered, let us, if it pleases you, honor the memory of the holy apostle Peter: let letters be written to Julius, the bishop of Rome, by those who examined the case; if he judges that the case must be reconsidered, let it be reconsidered and let him appoint judges; if however he concludes that the case is not such

that it ought to be rehashed, whatever he shall have decreed shall stand confirmed. Does this please everybody?" The council answered: "It does."

Canon 4. Bishop Gaudentius said: "Let this provision, if it pleases you, be added to this very holy decision you have made: when a bishop has been deposed by the judgment of the bishops living in neighboring places, and has proclaimed that his case must be handled in the city of Rome, after the appeal of him who apparently has been deposed, in no event may another bishop be ordained to replace him in his see unless the case shall have been determined by the judgment of the bishop of Rome."

Canon 5. Bishop Hosius said: "But it has been agreed that if a bishop has been accused, and the bishops of that region have met, passed judgment and deposed him from his rank, and he shall have taken refuge with the most blessed bishop of the Roman Church, and requested the case to be heard: if he [the bishop of Rome] has agreed (for him) to be heard, and has thought it just that the case should be reopened, let him deign to write to the bishops in the neighboring province, and the one next to it, that they examine the whole matter diligently, and define in reliance upon the truth. If, however, he who requests his case to be heard again by his own petition has moved the bishop of Rome to send a presbyter with a special mission, it shall be in the bishop's power to say what he wishes or as seems fit to him; (and) if he determines to send [legates] to pass judgment together with the bishops, as having the authority of him who sent them, it will be within his discretion; if, however, he considers the bishops sufficient to make the final decision on the case, he shall do that which, in his most wise counsel, he judges best." [Mansi 3: 23-5]

The canons of Sardica were included in collections of the Latin,

Syriac, Armenian and Greek churches. The Greek text appears in the *Synagoga L Titulorum* of Patriarch John III Scholasticus [565-577] of Constantinople. The Byzantine Council of Trullo, in 692, also accepted the canons of Sardica. [Mansi 11: 940]

Among Latin collections, the canons of Sardica appear in the ancient *Prisca* [PL 56: 775-7], the collection of Dionysius Exiguus, and the *Hispana* or Spanish collection of canons. Among African writers, Fulgentius Ferrandus, a deacon of Carthage, cited the Sardican canons on appeals to Rome in a brief collection of canons compiled about 530. [PL 67: 949 sq.; PL 84: 115 sq.]

“The Head, the See of Peter”

The council communicated its decisions in letters to all the bishops, to the Church of Alexandria, and to Julius of Rome. In their address to Julius, the bishops did not take it amiss that he had been absent from the council. They wrote:

...most beloved brother, although you were separated in the body, you were present by a like mind and will: and there was an honorable and necessary reason for your absence, lest either schismatic wolves engage in theft through subterfuge, or heretical dogs, stirred up with rabid fury, bark away, or at any rate the serpent, the devil, pour out the poison of blasphemies. *For this will seem best and most exceedingly fitting if the bishops of the Lord, from each of the different provinces, refer to the head [caput], that is, the see of Peter the apostle...* [Mansi 3: 40]

The testimony to Rome's primacy is so remarkable that some critics considered this passage an interpolation or gloss, but it does appear in the *Historical Fragments* of Hilary of Poitiers [PL 10: 639].

Subscriptions to the Council of Sardica include those of bishops from places as diverse as Africa, Egypt, Phrygia, Isauria, Ancyra, Gaza, Thrace,

Larissa, Thessalonica, Nicopolis, Dardania, Macedonia, Achaia, Thessalia, Cyprus, Palestine, Arabia, Asia, Dacia, Pannonia, Gaul, Spain and Italy, not to mention Athanasius himself. [Athanasius, *Apol.* 37-50. PG 25: 311 sq. Cf. Mansi 3: 38-9]

In 345, when the intruder Gregory died, Athanasius was able to return to his Church at Alexandria. He went through Rome, where Julius, full of esteem for the venerable bishop, gave him a letter for the Alexandrian faithful. In the same year, 345, a Council of Milan also condemned the heretical Photinus, bishop of Sirmium. In 347, a new Council at Milan received a request for reconciliation with the Church from two Danubian bishops: Valens and Ursacius. In abject tones they confessed their slanders against Athanasius, noting that Pope Julius had been kind enough to pardon them. Later events showed, however, that Valens and Ursacius were hardly sincere. [PL 10: 647-8. Athanasius, *Apol.* 58, PG 25: 353. DTC 8: 1916-17. Hefele 2: 190.]

Pope Liberius and the Onslaught of Heresy

Pope Julius died in April 352, but his apostolic zeal was not forgotten in the east. The Alexandrian Synaxarion, or book of saints, commemorates the “holy father Julius, pope of Rome,” on the Egyptian date 5 Amshir. [CSCO 78 (*Arab.* 12): 474]

The successor of Julius, Liberius [352-366], moved quickly to obtain the emperor’s consent for a council of eastern and western bishops at Aquileia, to restore peace to the Church. The Roman legates, the bishops Vincent of Capua and Marcellus of Campania, met the emperor at Arles, in late 353. Two Arian intriguers were also present: Valens and Ursacius! The legates were outwitted: at a meeting of the bishops of Gaul, all of them except one—Paulinus of Treves—subscribed to the condemnation of Athanasius. Even the Roman legates subscribed. [Ep. 1. PL 8: 1349]

Within a year, however, Pope Liberius decided to try again. In 354 Lucifer, bishop of Cagliari, offered to approach the imperial court and obtain a fresh council. As additional legates, Pope Liberius sent the priest Pancratius

and the deacon Hilary, who were to meet with the confessor bishop, Eusebius of Vercelli. [PL 8: 1351 sq.]

The council, held not at Aquileia as Liberius wished, but at Milan in 355, was a disaster. Hundreds of bishops were induced to sign the condemnation of Athanasius; Rome's legates, along with a handful of orthodox bishops, had to flee. [Sozomen, HE III, 9] Watching the dominoes toppling *en masse* in east and west, Liberius knew that he was the next target. Writing to the exiled clergy, he praised their heroism and requested their prayers, so as to bear the upcoming persecution with "inviolable faith." [Ep. 7. PL 8: 1358]

The pope was right. After the Council of Milan, the emperor and the eunuch Eusebius put pressure on Liberius to sign the condemnation of Athanasius. When the pope stood firm, he was led out into exile, at Berea in Thrace. Another bishop named Felix was installed to replace Liberius at Rome. [Theodoret, HE II, 13]

Pope Liberius emerged from exile after two years. Rumor had it that he had earned his return by agreeing to the condemnation of Athanasius, and signing an ambiguous profession of faith. Ammianus Marcellinus, a pagan author writing on late Roman history, describes Liberius as "overseer of the Christian Law," *Christianae legis antistes*, adding that the eastern ruler, Constantius, keenly desired to have the condemnation of Athanasius supported "also by the greater authority of the bishop of the Eternal City," *auctoritate quoque potiore aeternae urbis episcopi*. [Book XV, 7].

We will examine the historical sources about the "fall of Liberius" later. Meanwhile, in 359 there was a double synod, with western bishops meeting at Rimini and eastern bishops at Seleucia; the synod professed that the Son was "like" the Father. [Athanasius, *De Synodis*, 8] Writing to the Catholic bishops of Italy, Pope Liberius called for mercy for bishops who had fallen out of weakness, provided that they condemned Arianism and rededicated themselves to "the Catholic and apostolic faith, even unto the Council of Nicea." [PL 8: 1373]

At Antioch, the Election of Meletius

In 360 Meletius, bishop of Sebaste, was elected to the see of Antioch. By all accounts, he was a likable man: many Church Fathers, who had been his friends, praise his mild-mannered goodness. But what faith was he going to profess? [Theodoret, HE II, 27]

The answer came when Constantius asked the leading prelates present at Antioch to explain their faith. Meletius, when his turn came, gave a sermon that seemed to indicate orthodox leanings. Asked to summarize his teaching, Meletius made a dramatic gesture: he put up three fingers and then withdrew two, saying: “they are thought to be three, but we speak of them as one.” In other words, Meletius believed in the Trinity. Within a month, he too was led into exile. [PG 42, 457-65; Theodoret, HE II, 27]

The party faithful to Meletius, the “Meletians,” offered to form one church with the Eustathians led by Paulinus. The Eustathians refused, on the grounds that Meletius had been elected by Arians. It was guilt by association: in the eyes of the Eustathians, the Meletians were “tainted.” Now there were two groups of orthodox faithful at Antioch, which were not in union with each other. [Sozomen, HE IV, 27-8]

When Constantius died and was succeeded by Julian the Apostate [361-363], the exiled bishops were allowed to return. Athanasius returned to his see and convoked a council of Alexandria to reaffirm the orthodox faith. [Socrates, HE III, 4-7]

The Alexandrian Council paid close attention to the disputes at Antioch, where Meletians and Eustathians had the same faith in the Trinity but used different terms to express it. Meletians spoke of one God in three “hypostases.” Eustathians spoke of one God in three *prosopa*, Greek for “persons.” Each side had objections to the other’s terminology. The Greek word *hypostasis* had originally meant “substance.” To speak of three substances or natures in one God was blasphemy. On the other hand, *prosopa*, in the Greek, had originally referred to masks worn by actors: was that really the

proper term to use for the Divine Persons? the Meletians objected. Athanasius saw that both sides really had the same faith, and urged them to reconcile. In the *Tome to the Antiochians*, he suggested that the Meletians join the Eustathians, on the basis of the faith of Nicea. [PG 26: 796-809]

Not everybody, however, was interested in reconciliation. Another bishop was present at Antioch: Lucifer of Cagliari, who had also been sent into exile for the faith. Lucifer, who sympathized with the Eustathians, ordained their leader Paulinus a bishop. Meletius returned from exile to find a rival bishop at Antioch. [Theodoret, HE III, 2]

Before long there was another claimant to the see of Antioch, named Vitalis. Now there were *three* competing bishops at Antioch, not counting the Arian faction!

Eastern Bishops Approach Pope Liberius

In the 360s the Macedonians, who denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit, were being severely pressured by Arians, and decided to take refuge with Liberius, bishop of Rome. A delegation led by the bishops Eustathius of Sebaste, Silvanus of Tarsus and Theophilus of Castabala came to Rome, hoping to see the emperor and Pope Liberius. At first Liberius refused to receive the delegates, but they insisted, and to demonstrate their good faith offered a *libellus*, or profession of faith, embracing the Nicene Creed. The *libellus* also contained a provision that if these eastern bishops were accused of some crime, the case was to be judged by bishops chosen by Liberius. Binding the delegates by the terms of this *libellus*, Pope Liberius received them into communion. When the delegates professed the same faith at a synod in Sicily, Pope Liberius and the council wrote to the bishops of Macedonia, announcing the developments and noting that the delegates, receiving the precepts of Liberius, were sending envoys from city to city, preaching the Nicene faith. The letters of Liberius and the west were reread with joy at a Council of Tyana of Cappadocia. The easterners planned another council at Tarsus in Cilicia, with the intention of consolidating the Nicene resurgence in the east, but imperial interference prevented the council. [Socrates, HE IV, (11) 12]

“One See of Peter,” and the Era of Pope Damasus

When Pope Liberius died in September 366, the deacon Damasus was elected to succeed him. The election was heavily contested: another deacon, Ursinus, had claimed the succession for himself; his followers gathered in the Liberian basilica, demanding that the emperor take action against Damasus. A pro-Ursinian account entitled, *Quae gesta sunt inter Liberium et Felicem episcopos*, which depicts Damasus as a perjurer and a homicidal man, presents the Ursinians as appealing to the emperor: “Christian emperor, nothing is hidden from thee. Let all the bishops come to Rome. Let the case be examined... *let the man-slayers be cast out of the see of Peter!*” [CSEL 35: 3–4]

After a bloody struggle and massacre, Damasus was recognized as the uncontested successor of Liberius. An inscription in the baptistery of St. Peter’s basilica reads:

One see of Peter, one pure bath. [PL 13: 414]

Pope Damasus was a strong opponent of Arianism. By 368 he had condemned the heretics Ursacius and Valens, and he went on to anathematize Auxentius, the Arian bishop of Milan. [Coustant, 591]

Meanwhile, in 370 the priest Basil became bishop of Caesaria in Cappadocia. The new bishop was a friend and passionate advocate for Meletius of Antioch. If Meletius could achieve uncontested recognition as bishop of Antioch, Basil believed, the orthodox cause could triumph in the east. Basil decided to contact Athanasius and Damasus. With their support, he hoped, the orthodox east would rally around Meletius. Once Antioch, “head” of the eastern province, was united under Meletius, the rest of the province could be healed much more easily. [Ep. 66. PG 32: 424 sq.]

Writing to Athanasius in 371, Basil made the case for Meletius, confident that the west was in agreement:

...of necessity I must point out to you that the entire East,
and I too, who am entirely of one mind with it, strongly

desires to see Meletius administer the Church of the Lord; irreproachable for his faith, he cannot be compared to anyone in his conduct; may he be at the head of the entire body... It is absolutely necessary and advantageous that the rest unite with him as small rivers join great ones... Moreover, your prudence, which cannot be surpassed, is not unaware that *the westerners, who are of one mind with you, have already accepted these dispositions*, as indicated by the letters which the blessed Silvanus brought us. [Ep. 67. PG 32: 428]

In another letter from 371, Basil asked Athanasius to cooperate, writing: “We have recourse to your perfection, as it were, to the summit of all, and we use you as the counsellor and master of our action...” Basil also explained why Damasus was being asked to intervene:

It seemed in order to us to write to the bishop of Rome, so that he might consider our affairs and give his opinion: given the difficulty of reaching a common decision in council and sending delegates from there, [Damasus] himself could use his authority in the matter and send delegates capable of bearing the fatigues of the journey, men of gentleness and character, apt to bring back the straying... they will bring all the decisions taken since the Council of Rimini, which have wiped out whatever violence had wrought over there... [Ep. 69. PG 32: 429-31]

Basil asked Athanasius to welcome a deacon of Meletius named Dorotheus, who was to continue on to Rome to present a letter to Damasus. The letter, composed by Basil, paints a vivid picture of the dire straits of the eastern church:

To renew the laws of ancient charity and the peace of the Fathers, to restore its strength to this salutary gift of Christ, a salutary gift wounded in our day, is for us a necessity, a utility, and I am well aware that this is agreeable to the dispositions of Your Piety. What is more desirable, in fact,

than to see men who are separated by the immense distance of places united by the unity of charity, in the harmonious unity of the members of the body of Christ?

We await but one solution: to be taken into consideration by your mercy. We have always been comforted by your extraordinary charity, and for some time the rumor that you were coming to our assistance comforted us. But with these hopes disappointed, at the limits of our endurance we write to you to call upon you and urge you to come to our aid, to send from your midst men who are of one mind with us, to reconcile the dissidents, to restore the amity of the churches of God, or at least to make known to you more clearly those who are responsible for the present disorder, so that from now on you may know with whom you should be in communion.

We are asking for nothing new, but something customary to the holy men of old and especially to you. We know, by the tradition of our fathers and thanks to letters which we still keep, that the most blessed bishop Dionysius, who was illustrious among you for the true faith and his other virtues, visited by letter our church of Caesarea, thus comforting our fathers and sending men to redeem the brethren held captive [by the Persians].

We are not mourning the destruction of earthen houses but the loss of churches, not bodily slavery but the captivity of souls, which, from what we see, is being reinforced every day, thanks to the defenders of heresy. If you do not rise up to help us, in a short time you will not even have anybody to whom you may extend a hand, because everything will be in the power of error. [Ep. 70. PG 32: 433-6]

Rome's Response to Basil

In response to Basil, Sabinus, a deacon of Milan, brought into the east a letter from the Roman council of 370. The letter firmly defended the faith of Nicea, “which was established by apostolic authority, to be retained with everlasting firmness, and in this faith the easterners who recognize themselves as Catholic, and the westerners, glory with us.” The letter also repudiated the Council of Rimini, declaring: “neither could any prejudice arise from the number of those who met at Rimini, since it is clear that *neither the bishop of Rome, whose sentence ought to have been sought before all, nor Vincent [of Capua], who kept the priesthood unblemished for so many years, gave any consent to such decisions...*” [Theodoret, HE II, 17; PL 13: 749]

Thirty-two eastern bishops, including Basil, Gregory of Nazianzen, Eusebius of Samosata, Meletius of Antioch, and Nerses, primate of Armenia, responded by letter. Warning that the Arian heresy threatened to engulf the entire east, they pleaded, “Do not permit half the world to fall prey to error, and the faith to be extinguished in the regions where first it shone.” [St. Basil, Ep. 92]

The bishops asked the westerners to send enough delegates to hold a synod, adding:

...they shall restore the faith of the fathers of Nicea, proscribe heresy... and unite in concord those who follow the same doctrine. Then those who recognize the faith of the Apostles, suppressing the schisms... shall then be under the authority of the Church... *Truly worthy of the highest congratulations is the gift given to Your Piety by the Lord, of distinguishing what is falsified from what is acceptable and pure, and to preach the faith of the fathers without dissembling. We have approved it and recognized it as fortified by apostolic characters. We have given our assent to it and to the other decisions of the synodical letter [as] canonical and legitimate...* [St. Basil, Ep. 92]

Meanwhile, by May 373 Athanasius was dead and his successor Peter announced his ordination by letter to Damasus, who responded by granting letters of communion. However, the deacon who brought the letters from Rome was thrown into prison and so was Peter. Even in prison, Peter was undaunted; not only did he fire off a letter denouncing the Arians, he managed to escape, taking refuge at Rome. Eventually Peter returned to Alexandria, armed with letters from Damasus confirming both the faith of Nicea and Peter's ordination. At this development the orthodox restored Peter as their bishop. [Socrates, HE IV: 20–22, 37]

The Westerners, “totally ignorant of what is happening here”?

In 373 Evagrius, a priest of Antioch, brought news from the west: apparently it had not been enough to send a single deacon, Dorotheus, to represent Meletius at the Apostolic See; Rome wanted a higher ranking delegation so as to have an official pretext for a visitation of the East. Basil was stunned. The easterners, faced with virtual annihilation of the Nicene faith in their area, had pleaded for help. Was Rome standing on *protocol*? [Cf. St. Basil, Ep. 138]

Damasus did one more thing to exasperate supporters of Meletius. When Vitalis, one of the claimants to the see of Antioch, came to Rome to gain the support of Damasus, the pope questioned Vitalis, and referred his case... *to Paulinus*. Damasus sent Paulinus a profession of faith “not so much for yourself, who share the communion of the same faith, as for those who, subscribing to it, may wish to be joined to you, that is, *to us through you*.” [PL 13: 356]

While the letter caused elation among supporters of Paulinus, Basil—convinced that the west had been in communion with Meletius—was aghast. Basil wrote to his friend, Count Terentius:

A further rumor has reached us... *that the brethren who are with Paulinus... are circulating a letter of the westerners, assigning to them the episcopate of the church in Antioch, but which*

misrepresents Meletius, the admirable bishop of the true church of God. I do not wonder at this. They are totally ignorant of what is happening here...We accuse no one; we pray that we may have love for all, especially towards the household of faith. *We congratulate those who have received the letter from Rome. And inasmuch as it is a great testimony in their favor, we only hope it is true and confirmed by the facts.* But we shall never be able to persuade ourselves on these grounds to ignore Meletius, or to forget the church under him, or to treat as petty, and of little importance to the true religion, the questions which originated the division. I shall never consent to give in merely because somebody is elated at receiving a letter from men, even if it had come down from heaven itself. But if he does not agree with the sound doctrine of the faith, I cannot look upon him as in communion with the saints. [Ep. 214. Tr. Giles, 134]

When the deacon Dorotheus suggested that another delegation, including Basil's fellow bishop Gregory, go to Rome, Basil was doubtful: what could Gregory, a man foreign to all servile flattery, accomplish at Rome? Basil depicted Damasus as a haughty and lofty man judging from on high, incapable of listening to mere earthlings who told him the truth. [Ep. 215]

In spite of everything, Dorotheus continued convincing Basil to renew contacts with Rome. Still skeptical about the prospects of help, Basil penned this assessment of Damasus:

...the line from Diomedes occurs to me: "do not ask him; he is a proud man." To be sure, the more haughty spirits are flattered, the more insolent they become. If God is merciful to us, what other help is necessary to us, and if God's anger lasts, what help can we have from western pride? [The westerners] don't know the truth, and they don't want to find it out...They argue with those who announce the truth to them, by themselves confirm heresy. As for myself, I thought of writing to *their coryphaeus* [Damasus] a letter

outside the ordinary framework, discussing ecclesiastical matters only in enigmas. They don't understand the truth about us and don't take the steps to learn it. In general, I wanted to establish that those who are already overwhelmed with temptation should not be insulted, *nor should he consider his dignity a reason for pride*, a sin which by itself is capable of making us enemies of God. [Ep. 239. PG 32: 893]

Basil's indignation seems manifestly excessive, but it did make one thing clear. Although the faith of Damasus was irreproachable, the pope's policy was bombing in the east. St. Basil complained that the westerners were not only ignorant of the true state of eastern affairs, but had even, through that ignorance, helped to "confirm heresy." A prime reason for the saint's frustration was the case of Eustathius of Sebaste. Eustathius— not to be confused with St. Eustathius of Antioch— was a leader of the eastern delegation to Pope Liberius in the 360's. Writing to the westerners, Basil noted that this Eustathius had had an extensive career in the service of heresy:

[Eustathius] was once taught by Arius... and was reputed as one of his most authentic disciples. As he returned to his own country, and seeing himself condemned for his errors by the blessed Hermogenes, bishop of Caesarea, he presented to him a confession of orthodox faith. Having thus obtained ordination, he ran... to Eusebius, bishop of Constantinople, who himself yielded to none in respect for the impious teaching of Arius. Then, as he was driven out for certain reasons, on his return he had to account for his doctrine again to his countrymen, which he did by hiding his impious thinking under the appearance of a certain correctness of terms. Having obtained the episcopate, as if by chance, he was seen at the Council of Ancyra signing the anathema to the *homooousios* [i.e., the faith of Nicea]. From there he went to Seleucia, and with those who partook of his opinions, he did what everyone knows [against the faith of Nicea]. At Constantinople, he again accepted everything the heretics

proposed, and thus he was driven from the episcopate... [Ep. 263. PG 32: 977-80]

Eustathius had gone to Rome, Basil continued, in the hope of being reestablished:

*As a way of being reestablished, he thought of going to find you. What the blessed bishop Liberius proposed to him, or to what he agreed, we do not know; we only know that he [Eustathius] brought back a letter which reestablished him, and that, after having showed it to the Council of Tyana, he was reestablished on his see. At present, he is destroying the faith for which he was received; he unites himself with those who anathematize the *homoousion* [the faith of Nicea], and he is the head of the heresy of the Macedonians [who denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit]... [PG 32: 980]*

Basil insisted that the westerners, who had received Eustathius, repair the scandal caused by this wolf in sheep's clothing, and clarify the conditions on which Eustathius had been accepted:

Since then it is from there that the power of ravaging the churches came to him, and because he uses the trust you have given him to pervert the multitude, it is necessary that the correction also come from there, and that letters be sent informing the churches on what conditions he was received, and how, by his current change, he has nullified the benefit which the Fathers of that time granted him... [PG 32: 980]

Jerome's Anxious Letters to Damasus

About 376, another Father got involved in the dispute at Antioch. The monk Jerome, who had spent some time at Antioch and then retired to the desert of Chalcis, had been urged to declare his faith: did he believe in "three hypostases" or not? Suspicious of such questions, Jerome decided

Keys Over the Christian World

to consult Pope Damasus, writing:

Because the east, torn apart by the long furor existing between its peoples, is tearing to bits the Lord's seamless garment 'woven from the top throughout,' and foxes are destroying Christ's vineyard, and since among the broken cisterns that 'hold no water' it is difficult to understand where is the 'sealed fountain,' and that 'garden enclosed,' I therefore determined to consult the chair of Peter, and that faith which was praised by the Apostle's mouth... I now ask for food for my soul, from the same source whence I once received Christ's garment [in baptism]...

I speak with the successor of the Fisherman, with the disciple of the Cross. Following in the first place nobody but Christ, I am joined in communion with your Beatitude, that is, with the chair of Peter. Upon that rock I know that the church has been built. Whoever eats the lamb outside of this house is profane. Whoever shall not have been in the Ark of Noah shall perish, when the flood prevails...

Vitalis I have not known, Meletius I spurn; Paulinus I know not. Whoever does not gather with you scatters: that is, he who is not of Christ is of Antichrist... Determine I beseech you, if it is agreeable to you, and I will not be afraid to speak of three hypostases... [Ep. 15. PL 22: 355-7]

Receiving no response, Jerome followed up a few months later with another letter to Damasus, writing:

If anybody is joined to the Chair of Peter, he is mine. *Meletius, Vitalis and Paulinus say that they adhere to you:* I could believe it if one of them asserted this. As it is, either two are lying, or all three. Therefore I beseech your Beatitude, by the Cross of the Lord... to signify to me by your letters with whom I must communicate in Syria... [Ep. 16. PL 22: 359]

Rome Declares Her Faith to the East

Meanwhile, Dorotheus and the priest Sanctissimus were bringing the east a communication from Rome. Although Basil had been profoundly vexed by Rome's policy in the east, his irritation was short-lived. Before long, he wrote to the priests of Antioch about "the love and concern of the entire west towards us." [Ep. 253. PG 32: 940]

The saint was referring to a decree of a Roman council under Damasus, which was sent into the east. After reaffirming the dogma of the Trinity, and condemning the Apollinarian heresy, which denied that Christ had a true human soul, the council had written: "*this is our faith, most beloved brethren: whoever follows it is in communion with us. A discolored body deforms the members. To these we give our communion, because they approve of our teaching in all respects. God forbid that the pure faith be stained with different colors.*" The council urged the bishops not to neglect canonical order in ordaining clergy, and not to grant communion easily to prevaricators. Regarding injustices from which the easterners were suffering, the council promised assistance, adding that Dorotheus, a deacon of Meletius, would discuss this orally. [PL 13: 351-2]

Replying to the westerners, Basil expressed gratitude for the missive and the west's compassion for the orthodox east. Basil still wanted the westerners to visit the east and denounce, "with all your precision," the wolves in sheep's clothing; the saint believed that a common sentence pronounced by western and eastern bishops would command acceptance. Basil had in mind the Arian Eustathius of Sebaste, Apollinarius of Laodicea, who had attributed an imperfect humanity to the Lord, and... Paulinus of Antioch, about whom Basil was highly suspicious. "If his election has anything reprehensible about it, you yourselves could say," Basil wrote, with about as much tactfulness as he could muster on this subject. [Ep. 263. PG 32: 976-81]

A Debate Among Easterners... in the Presence of Damasus

When Basil's letter was received for consideration by a council at

Keys Over the Christian World

Rome in the late 370s, the dispute between the factions at Antioch flared up as well. Peter of Alexandria, in the presence of Damasus, treated Meletius as an Arian, while Dorotheus defended his bishop. Peter also heard from Basil, who defended Meletius as well. [Ep. 266]

Two fragments, *Illud sane miramur* and *Non nobis*, contain Rome's answer to the east. The fragments condemn the Apollinarian heresy: if Arians are condemned because they attribute to the Lord an imperfect divinity, we must likewise condemn those who attribute to Him an imperfect humanity, the council reasoned: if Christ had been an imperfect man, He could not have saved the whole man. The council also reaffirmed the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Decades later, Sozomen wrote that the Roman decision had settled this issue. [HEVI, 22. PL 13: 352-3]

The council apologized for being unable to offer the east more solace, but at least it will be a consolation, it continued, if you know the integrity of our faith, and glory in having the same sentiments as ours, and are sure of the concern we feel for “the members”—a discreet reference to Rome's headship of the churches. [PL 13: 353]

Theodoret, bishop of Cyrus in Palestine [c. 450], preserved one letter of Pope Damasus, calling it a synodical addressed to the eastern bishops. However, based on the style and protocol of the letter, Mgr. Batiffol believed that it was addressed to the clergy of Beirut, who were asking Damasus to depose their bishop—Timothy, an Apollinarian. Damasus declared that he had already done so, and asked:

Why then do you ask me again for the deposition of Timothy, who by a judgment of the apostolic see, in the presence of Peter, bishop of Alexandria, was deposed here, together with his teacher Apollinaris? [HE V, 10. PG 82: 1221]

Pope Damasus also spoke of his own office, writing:

Most honored sons, because your charity renders

the Apostolic See the homage due to it, you do the greatest credit to yourselves. If, especially, in the holy church where the holy apostle sat [and] taught how we must hold the helm which we have received, nevertheless we confess that we are not up to this honor, but for that reason we apply ourselves in every way to be able to arrive at the blessedness (of the holy apostle)... [HEV, 10. PG 82: 1220]

The Pope and the Civil Authority

The council of Rome [c. 378] not only addressed the eastern churches, it also had to deal with pressing matters in the west. Describing itself as “innumerable [bishops] from various parts [of Italy] gathered at the sublime sanctuary of the Apostolic See,” it wrote to the new emperor, Gratian [367–383]. The bishops were grateful that Ursinus, the rival to Damasus who had caused serious disturbances in the Roman Church, had been condemned and exiled. The emperor had decreed that the bishop of Rome was to examine cases involving “the bishops of the rest of the Churches,” so that bishops would be subject not to secular judges but to a “pontiff of religion.” The fathers called this law “excellent and worthy of religious princes.” [PL 13: 575–8]

The council noted, however, that certain bishops were not accepting the judgment of the Roman bishop; for example the bishop of Parma, who had been “cast out by our judgment,” had remained “impudently” in his see. The bishop of Pozzuoli, condemned by a previous Roman council, had also “crept back” to his see, notwithstanding an imperial rescript to the effect that the judgment of the Roman council was final. The council complained that an African bishop named Restitutus had also ignored a summons, and that Donatists from Africa had ordained a bishop named Claudianus, who was causing disturbances in Rome. The Roman council asked Gratian to enforce the laws applicable to such prelates. [PL 13: 579–80]

The Fathers asked Gratian to decree that any bishop deposed by a pope or council who ignored the sentence, or who refused to answer a

summons from a council, was to be summoned to Rome by the Pretorian Prefect or imperial vicar. In more distant regions, the accused bishop was to appear before his metropolitan. If the bishop under accusation was himself a metropolitan, he either had to come to Rome or stand trial before judges delegated by the Roman bishop. If the accused was not satisfied about the integrity of the judges, the Fathers proposed a right of appeal, either to the bishop of Rome or a council of at least fifteen neighboring bishops. A bishop condemned in this fashion, the Council proposed, should have no further recourse. [PL 13: 581-2]

Noting that Damasus had been falsely accused by a litigant named Isaac, the Fathers also requested that if the pope had to be subject to a lay tribunal at all, it should be the imperial council. In such matters, the Fathers urged, let not “our previously mentioned brother Damasus” be inferior to the rest of the bishops, because “although he is equal to them in office, he nevertheless excells them by the prerogative of the Apostolic See.” [PL 13: 582]

The *Collectio Avellana*, a sixth-century compilation of important documents related to papal affairs, contains a rescript called *Ordinariorum sententias* in which Gratian granted the Roman council’s requests and incorporated much of its language. [CSEL 35: 54-8]

The Council of Antioch

St. Basil died on January 1, 379, without seeing Meletius of Antioch officially recognized by Rome, but later in 379, a council of 150 bishops met at Antioch, with Meletius presiding. The bishops subscribed to the profession of faith from the Roman council of 377. The fragment *Non nobis*, which defends the Nicene faith, ends with the remark:

This is the end of this letter, or exposition [of the faith] of the synod held at Rome under Pope Damasus, and sent into the East, in which the entire Eastern Church, in a synod held at Antioch, believed with a like faith, and all, so consenting, confirmed this faith with their signatures... [PL

13: 353]

The fragment includes some signatures of the bishops, which begin:

I, Meletius, bishop of Antioch, consent to everything written above, so believing and teaching, and if anyone believes otherwise, let him be anathema... [PL 13: 353]

The signature of Meletius is followed by those of Eusebius of Samosata, Pelagius of Laodicea, Zeno of Tyre, Eulogius of Edessa, Bematius of Mallo, Diodorus of Tarsus, “and similarly another 146 eastern bishops, whose subscription is preserved today in the authentic copy in the archives of the Roman Church.” [PL 13: 353–4]

The orthodox reaction was strengthened when Emperor Theodosius, in February 380, decreed the following law, which was inserted into the Theodosian Code under the title, *On the Catholic Faith*:

We will that all people who are governed by our clemency practice the same religion as the divine apostle Peter delivered to the Romans, as declared by the religion insinuated by him to this very day, and which the Pontiff Damasus evidently follows, and Peter, bishop of Alexandria, a man of apostolic holiness. Those who follow this law we order to take the name of catholic Christians... [Bk XVI, 1, 2. Ed. Mommsen, *Libri Theodosiani XVI cum Constitutionibus Sirmondianis*, Berlin 1954, 833]

Sozomen, a Greek historian wrote [c. 440 A.D.] that by this decree, Theodosius intended all his subjects “to follow the religion which Peter, *coryphaeus* of the apostles, handed down from the beginning, which Damasus, bishop of Rome and Peter of Alexandria kept at that time; only those who worshipped the Divine Trinity... were to be called Catholics; those who taught otherwise, heretics...” [HEVII, 4]

***Flavian to Paulinus:
“If you embrace the communion of Damasus...”***

Theodoret, bishop of Cyrus [c. 450] writes that when Gratian ruled the eastern and western empires [c. 381], he had ordered places of worship “to be given to those who embraced the communion of Damasus. This Damasus was the bishop of Rome, and was outstanding for his praiseworthy life, and was prepared to say and do anything on behalf of the apostolic teachings.” [HE V, 2. PG 82: 1197]

A general named Sapor had the task of enforcing the imperial edict. Theodoret adds:

...as Sapor entered Antioch to enforce the law, both Vitalis and Paulinus claimed to be of the party of Damasus... But the divine Meletius, eschewing their contention, kept quiet. Yet the most wise Flavian, who was still a mere priest then, spoke first to Paulinus, with the general listening: “O friend, if you embrace the communion of Damasus, then show us clearly the agreement of your teaching... Show then the harmony of your teaching, and then take the church, in accordance with the law.” [HE V, 3. PG 82: 1201]

Flavian also had some words for Vitalis:

I am amazed, O friend, that you are fighting against the truth so shamelessly, since you know for certain that the marvelous Damasus says that our complete nature was assumed by God the Word, whereas you are forever teaching the contrary... But if this accusation is false... embrace the teaching of Damasus, and take the sacred buildings. [PG 82: 1201]

According to Theodoret, Meletius offered to tend the flock together with Paulinus, even suggesting that the episcopal throne be replaced with the book of the gospels, but Paulinus refused. Impressed with the meekness

of Meletius, Sapor decided to hand the churches over to him. [PG 82: 1201]

Socrates and Sozomen, however, relate that supporters of Meletius and Paulinus reached an agreement, that when one of the two rival bishops died, the other would be recognized as sole bishop of Antioch. Pursuant to this agreement, Socrates and Sozomen add, six of the leading priests of Antioch, including Flavian, took an oath not to become bishop or seek the episcopate. [Soc. HEV, 5; Soz. HEVII, 3]

The Second Ecumenical Council

Meanwhile the eastern emperor, Theodosius, was planning a council of the east at Constantinople, to consolidate the orthodox resurgence and affirm the divinity of the Holy Spirit against the Macedonian heresy. Pope Damasus did not oppose the calling of a council. Writing to the bishops of Macedonia and of Thessalonica, he decried the ordination of the pretender Maximus the Cynic as bishop of Constantinople. The philosophy of worldly wisdom is inimical to faith, wrote Damasus, who approved of the expulsion of Maximus. Regarding the upcoming council, Damasus added:

...since I have learned of the arrangements that a council take place at Constantinople... I admonish Your Holiness to insure that an utterly blameless bishop be elected for that city so that, through God's mercy, peace between Catholic bishops may be confirmed, and thus no more dissensions arise in the Church. I admonish your love further, not to allow anybody, contrary to the statutes of our fathers, to be transferred from one city to another, deserting the people entrusted to him and, through ambition, moving on to another people. For then contentions arise, and more serious schisms occur, since those who have lost their bishop cannot be without sorrow, and those who have received another city's bishop, in spite of their joy, understand that it is invidious for them to be under a bishop of other people. [PL 13: 367-9]

The council opened in May 381, and the bishops chose Gregory of Nazianzen, a man of exceptional holiness and theological gifts, as the next bishop of Constantinople. Before long, however, sad news was spreading throughout the east: Meletius, the man of God, was dead; and while his friends eulogized him, his body was brought back to Antioch. [St. Gregory Nazianzen, *Carmen de Vita Sua*, 1525-7, 1573-81. PG 37: 1135-9]

Meanwhile, the schism at Antioch cried out for a solution. If Socrates and Sozomen were correct, by virtue of the previous agreement Paulinus should have become the sole bishop of Antioch, thus ending the schism. According to Socrates, the party of the late Meletius was unwilling to obey Paulinus, and elected the priest Flavian as bishop. [HE V, 9] During this period Gregory resigned as bishop of Constantinople, and the council elected the aging Nectarius, a man of senatorial order, as his successor.

St. Ambrose was unhappy that the west had not been consulted; *his* candidate for the see of Constantinople was Maximus the Cynic, who had been rejected by the east and by Pope Damasus himself! Nevertheless Ambrose wrote to Theodosius, the eastern emperor, maintaining that either Maximus should be recognized as bishop of Constantinople, or that claimants to the see, “*in accordance with the rule and custom of the ancients*,” submit their dispute to a synod in the west, before the bishop of Rome and Italian bishops, “as Athanasius and Peter, bishops of Alexandria of holy memory, and many easterners had done, that they might appear to have taken refuge in the judgment of Rome, Italy and all the west.” [Ep. 13. PL 16: 950-53]

Be that as it may, Pope Damasus approved of the faith of the council. The Coptic Synaxarion has a special commemoration of the council, remarking: “The pope of Rome did not come, but he was replaced by his legates, who bore a hand-written letter.” Although ancient sources relate that St. Meletius of Antioch presided over the council, the Coptic Synaxarion, in an entry for July 20, claims that Timothy, bishop of Alexandria, presided, “because Damasus, pope of Rome, did not take part, or rather [Timothy] was his representative.” [PO 11: 755-6; CSCO 78 (*Arab.* 12): 449; PO 17: 691]

The outgoing bishop of Constantinople, Gregory Nazianzen, praised the Roman Church in a poem about his life, *Carmen de Vita Sua*. Nature has not given us two suns, Gregory remarked, but she has given us two Romes—Old Rome, and Constantinople, the New Rome—as lights of the whole world. “Regarding the faith which they uphold,” the saint continued, “Old Rome has long kept a straight course, and still does, uniting the whole West by the saving word, as is just for her who presides over all, reverencing the universal divine harmony.” [PG 37: 1068]

The Decree of Damasus: Rome’s Answer to Canon Three?

Canon 3 of the council had decreed that the bishop of Constantinople should have the primacy of honor after the bishop of Rome, “because Constantinople is the New Rome.” [Socrates, HEV, 8]

History records a response once attributed to Pope Gelasius [492–496], although much recent scholarship favors the view that it was actually from Pope Damasus and a Roman council of 382. The document, called “The Decree of Damasus” or the “Gelasian Decree,” gave this explanation for the Roman primacy:

Likewise it is decreed: ...we have considered that it ought to be announced that although all Catholic churches throughout the world comprise but one bridal chamber of Christ, nevertheless the holy Roman Church has been set before the other churches not by any synodical decrees but by the evangelical voice of our Lord and Savior, saying: “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it; and I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

The first see, therefore, is that of Peter the apostle, that of the Roman Church, which has neither stain nor

blemish nor anything of the kind. The second see was consecrated at Alexandria, in the name of Blessed Peter, by his disciple the evangelist Mark, and he, having been sent by St. Peter into Egypt, preached the word of truth and consummated a glorious martyrdom. The third see [of the most blessed apostle Peter] is at Antioch, which is considered honorable because he lived there before he came to Rome, and there the name of the new nation of Christians first arose. [PL 13: 374–6]

Two centuries after the council of Constantinople of 381, Pope St. Gregory the Great [590–604] remarked: “the Roman Church neither possesses, nor has she accepted, the canons or acts of that synod, but accepted that synod with respect to what was defined against Macedonius.” [Epp. VII, 34. PL 77: 893]

Ambrose, Rome and the East

By summer 381, the Council of Constantinople had completed its work. Bishops of the east were heading home to elect a new bishop of Antioch. They chose the priest Flavian, leader of the Meletian party.

The west was unhappy that it had not been consulted. A council, led by Ambrose of Milan, met at Aquileia. Ambrose was a close associate of the Roman Church, as we can see from an incident in his life. Ambrose’s brother Satyrus, who had been shipwrecked in an unfamiliar place, wished to receive baptism but uncertain of the local bishop’s orthodoxy, according to Ambrose, Satyrus “called the bishop to himself; nor did he consider any grace true unless it was of the true faith; he [Satyrus] asked him *whether he agreed with the Catholic bishops, that is, with the Roman Church.*” [De Excessu Fratris I, 47. PL 16: 1306]

St. Ambrose entered into these views, as is clear from a letter he wrote to Emperor Gratian, in the name of the council:

It was necessary to implore Your Clemency not to allow

the Roman Church, head of the entire Roman world, and the most sacred faith of the apostles to be disturbed, *for from thence, as from a fountain head, the rights of venerable communion flow unto all...* [Ep. 11. PL 16: 946]

As for the case of Antioch, a council was planned at Rome, so as to make a common decision. Paulinus, who had more support in the West than in the East, made the journey to Rome, accompanied by the monk Jerome and by Epiphanius, bishop of Cyprus. [St. Jerome, Ep. 127. PL 22: 1091]

The bishops of the east declined to come to Rome in 382. Instead, at a council in Constantinople, they sent a synodical letter to the west. “After you had convoked a council at Rome, by divine counsel, you called us also, out of your fraternal love for us, as your own members,” the bishops wrote. They tried to inform the west, politely, that provisions had already been made for the leading eastern sees. This letter was preserved by Theodoret. [HEV, 9]

The exact outcome of the Roman council is uncertain, but historical sources present the west as tilting decidedly towards Paulinus. According to Sozomen, the western and Egyptian bishops were indignant that Flavian had broken his oath; the west recognized Paulinus, ignored Flavian, and abstained from communion with Flavian’s consecrators. Sozomen adds that Paulinus was also favored in Egypt, Cyprus, and by some Arabian bishops, while the Syrians, Palestinians, Phoenicians, Armenians, Cappadocians, Galatians and inhabitants of Pontus were behind Flavian. [HEV, 11] Socrates agrees that the Egyptians, Cypriots and Arabians opposed Flavian, and that even some of the local faithful abandoned Flavian, because of his alleged perjury. [HEV, 10]

Damasus, Prince of the Episcopate?

Meanwhile, the Council of Aquileia condemned two Arian bishops, Palladius of Ratiaria and Secundianus of Singidunum. Another Arian bishop, Maximinus, defended his colleagues in a manuscript rediscovered about a

century ago. In his *Dissertation Against Ambrose*, Maximinus complained that the Council of Aquileia was not ecumenical, and that it should have invited Damasus as one bishop against many, “but perhaps,” Maximinus added ironically, “the faith of the most blessed Peter claims a prerogative for itself, with the consent of yourselves, its intimates and clients.” “Why does he [Damasus] not realize,” Maximinus continued, “and why do you not understand that the see of Peter is equal and common to all the bishops...?” [PL Suppl. 1: 722]

Maximinus also complained that Ambrose had read aloud three letters from Damasus, which prevented certain bishops from assisting at the council. “How great must be the arrogance of Damasus,” wrote Maximinus, “that he not only does not deign to come to the council, but interposes his authority, through your connivance, as prince of the episcopate, so as to prevent others from coming?” [PL Suppl. 1: 723]

At Antioch, the Schism Continues

The standoff at Antioch continued, with Flavian and the aging Paulinus as rival bishops. Before his death in the late 380s, Paulinus, acting alone, ordained as his successor the priest Evagrius. [Theodoret, HEV, 23] Egypt refused to recognize Evagrius, and even the west hesitated. Meanwhile, Flavian refused to submit to any more arbitration. [St. Ambrose, Ep. 56. PL 16: 1170–72]

In 391, a Council of Capua decided that Theophilus, bishop of Alexandria, should investigate the dispute at Antioch, using as a standard the canons of Nicea: whoever had been elected in accordance with these canons was to be recognized as the lawful bishop. Flavian refused to obey any summons, which drew some criticism from the bishop of Milan. Writing to Theophilus, Ambrose complained that Flavian was acting like a man above the law. “We believe that the matter ought to be referred to our holy brother, the bishop of the Roman Church,” Ambrose continued, confident that Theophilus would reach a conclusion acceptable to Rome. “Then we too, once we have received these decisions, undoubtedly approved by the Roman Church, shall enjoy the fruit of this judgment.” [Ep. 56. PL 16:

1172; Severus of Antioch, *infra*.]

According to Socrates, both Damasus of Rome and Theophilus, bishop of Alexandria were indignant at Flavian, considering him a perjurer, but Flavian managed to placate Theophilus, who in turn was able to mollify Damasus. [HE V, 15]

Severus of Antioch, writing over a century later, recorded a detail which is not in other sources. According to Severus, Theophilus of Alexandria was unable to examine the case of Antioch, which was examined in a council at Caesarea in Palestine. Severus writes:

...when Paulinus, being patriarch of the city of the Antiochenes, himself alone at the end of his life ordained Evagrius and appointed him his successor, while the orthodox bishops in the East lawfully ordained Flavian archbishop of the same Antioch, a synod was assembled to deal with this case: in the West in the city of Capua: and in the east at Caesarea in Palestine: *because Siricius, who was then archbishop of Rome, had decided that after the discussion at Capua the task of making a more careful investigation of the facts of the case should be transferred to the East*, Theophilus, the archbishop of the great city of the Alexandrians, having been invited to preside over those who were assembled: who owing to the overthrow of the heathen temples and of the images in Alexander's city had his time occupied and failed to join in assembly with them.

And then the synod of saintly bishops which was assembled at Caesarea in Palestine reported its decree to the God-loving kings of pious memory, Theodosius, Arcadius, and Honorius, and made it known to them in these words: 'For we have read the letter of our reverend brothers to our reverend brother and bishop Theophilus, and that which was written to ourselves the bishops of the East by the bishops at Capua, and that of the religious Siricius the bishop of Rome,

to the effect that before all things we must look to this point, i.e. not to disturb the canon of Nicea which clearly lays down that it is not permissible for the ordination of a bishop to be performed by one only.

There was further inserted in the letter of the religious bishop Siricius a decision also upon the hearing that was to be held: in which was inserted the statement: “there must be one bishop of Antioch, he who has been legally and ecclesiastically appointed according to the canon of the Synod of Nicea,” and which clearly decreed that an ordination performed by one is illegal and not to be accepted. *With joy therefore we have received the accurate teaching of bishop Siricius concerning the church canons, and, following this letter, we have decreed that these things be ratified:* in that we have given legal and just votes, to the effect that we know of one bishop only, the religious lord Flavian the bishop. [Ed. E. W. Brooks, *The Sixth Book of the Select Letters...* 2:223–4]

According to Theodoret, the bishops of Rome continued to complain to the court about Flavian; Theodosius summoned Flavian several times, brought him to Constantinople and commanded him to proceed to Rome. Flavian, however, remarking that it was winter, promised at first to do as commanded, and went home. Theodoret adds that the bishops of Rome, “not only the marvelous Damasus, but also after him Siricius, and the successor of Siricius Anastasius,” continued to importune the emperor, who tried again to force Flavian to go to Rome. This time Flavian answered:

“O emperor, if they criticize my faith as wrong, or claim that my life is unworthy of the priesthood, I will even accept the accusers as my judges and abide by their decision. But if their contention is about the see, or [my] episcopate, I shall not litigate for it, nor shall I resist those who wish to take it, but instead I shall yield, and relinquish the episcopate. Wherefore, O emperor, give the see of Antioch to whomever

you like.” [HE V, 23]

Impressed by this response, Theodosius commanded Flavian to go home and continue governing the flock. Years later, when the emperor went to Rome, he heard more complaints about Flavian. Reminding the westerners that Paulinus was long dead, that the promotion of Evagrius was uncanonical, and that the eastern churches, all Asia, Pontus, Thrace and Illyricum were in communion with Flavian, the emperor convinced the westerners to receive a delegation from Flavian. According to Theodoret, Flavian sent a delegation of various bishops, priests, and deacons led by Acacius, bishop of Berea, which reconciled the west with Flavian. [HE V, 23]

Finally, the churches were at peace.

Appendix. The Charges Against Pope Liberius

Pope Liberius [352–366] was sent into exile for two years because of his firm defense of the Nicene faith. Some historical sources relate that he obtained his release from exile by an odious compromise, consenting to condemn the great Athanasius or perhaps even subscribing to “heresy.” An examination of the historical and hagiographical sources on this subject may reveal a few surprises.

St. Athanasius, in *Historia Arianorum ad Monachos*, [ch. 41], after describing the pressure applied to Liberius by Emperor Constantius—pressure designed to make Liberius agree to the condemnation of Athanasius—wrote:

But Liberius, having been exiled, broke down after two years, and fearing the death with which he was threatened, subscribed... [PG 25: 741]

Although the text does not say expressly what Liberius signed, it seems to indicate the condemnation of Athanasius, who added that this event showed the violence of the heretics, Liberius’ hatred of heresy, and

Keys Over the Christian World

even his support for Athanasius when allowed to act freely. [PG 25: 741]

In the *Apology* against the Arians, Athanasius also wrote:

Although [Liberius] was unable to bear the tribulations of exile to the very end, yet he remained in our communion for two years... [PG 25: 409]

Some Catholic theologians believed that the works of Athanasius were interpolated here. E. Amann disavows this theory, calling it “an absolutely desperate hypothesis which also finds no support in the manuscript tradition.” [DTC 9: 638]

St. Jerome’s *Chronicle* describes how Liberius had been sent into exile, and a rival, Felix, had been intruded into the Roman episcopate, and adds:

...when Felix had been substituted into the episcopate by the Arians, many [of the clergy] perjured themselves and after a year they were thrown out with Felix because Liberius, overcome by the hardship of exile, subscribed to heretical depravity... [PL 27: 501-2]

In *De Viris Illustribus*, Jerome blames Fortunatianus, bishop of Aquileia, for having caused the fall of Liberius:

[Fortunatianus] is considered detestable because when Liberius, bishop of Rome, was first going into exile for the faith, he first solicited him, broke him and compelled him to subscribe to heresy... [PL 23: 735-38]

St. Hilary of Poitiers’ work *Adversus Valentem et Ursacium*, and the historical fragments generally attributed to Hilary, contain anathemas against “the prevaricator Liberius.”

A series of letters attributed to Liberius— *Pro Deifico, Quia scio vos,*

Non Doceo and *Studens paci* present him as agreeing to the condemnation of Athanasius, and entering into communion with heterodox eastern bishops on the basis of one of the Creeds of Sirmium. [PL 8: 1365 sq.]

The authenticity of these letters has been disputed for centuries. Dom John Chapman, writing in *Revue Benedictine* [1910], argued passionately, based on internal evidence, that the letters were fake. On the other hand, E. Amann thought that Chapman's "highly subtle remarks" were "not always convincing." [DTC 9: 657]

Sozomen wrote that certain court bishops represented to Liberius that the Nicene term *homoousios* was being used to support the heresies of Paul of Samosata and Photinus of Sirmium. According to Sozomen, these bishops presented the creed composed at the *synod of the dedication of the basilica at Antioch* and Liberius accepted it, condemning anyone who denied that the Son was like the Father in essence and in all respects. Eudoxius, an Arian bishop, then spread a rumor that Liberius had condemned the *homoousios* and taught that the Son was unlike the Father. [HE IV, 10-15]

The *Collectio Avellana* opens with a highly partisan account of the election of Damasus written by a supporter of his rival, Ursinus. This source depicts Damasus as a perjurer and homicide, and represents Constantius as telling the Romans: "You have Liberius, who shall return better than when he left you..." The writer adds that Constantius was referring "to his [Liberius'] consent, by which he [Liberius] lent his hand to unbelief..." [CSEL 35: 2]

Defenders of Liberius

Not all the Fathers considered Liberius a "prevaricator"; some even spoke highly of his holiness. Rufinus, writing about 400, was aware of rumors that Liberius had freed himself from exile through some odious compromise. However, Rufinus admits to being uncertain whether that was the case or not. [HE I, 28. PL 21: 498]

St. Ambrose, writing to his sister Marcella, who had become a nun,

Keys Over the Christian World

advised, “Go over the precepts of Liberius of blessed memory, and the holier the man, the more agreeable may his words be.” [PL 16: 219]

Writing to the westerners, St. Basil, who had criticized Damasus so sharply, speaks of “the blessed bishop Liberius.” [Ep. 263]

Pope Siricius [384–399] called Liberius “my predecessor of venerable memory,” and recalled how Liberius, after quashing the council of Rimini, had sent general decrees into all the provinces. [PL 13: 1133]

About 400, Pope Anastasius I [399–401] wrote a letter to Bishop Venerius of Milan, which was recently rediscovered. Praising the great defenders of orthodoxy, Anastasius included Liberius on a list of men “who would have preferred to be nailed to the cross rather than blaspheme against Christ God.” The text, first published in *Revue d’histoire et de littérature religieuses* 4 (1899), p. 6 sq., was reproduced in the Supplement to Migne’s *Patrologia Latina*. [Vol. I, 791]

Theodoret, bishop of Cyrus, who had been deposed at the “Robber Council” of Ephesus [449], appealed to Pope Leo the Great. In his letter Theodoret praised the Roman Church, among other reasons, because it had “never been infected with any heresy. It has never been occupied by an enemy of the true faith, but has preserved the apostolic grace intact.” [PG 83, 1324]

Elsewhere, Theodoret depicts Liberius as a saint and athlete for the truth. [HE II, 14. PG 82: 1040] Incidentally, Cassiodorus, in his *Tripartite History*, chose to reproduce Theodoret’s account. [Bk V, 18. PL 69: 998–9]

Pope Liberius was venerated as a saint in the east. The ninth-century *Synaxarion* of Basil Porphyrogenitus, containing commemorations of saints venerated in the Byzantine church, includes this entry for August 27:

The Blessed Liberius, athlete for the truth, was bishop of Rome during the rule of [Emperor] Constantius. In his zeal for the orthodox faith, he received the great Athanasius who

had been persecuted by heretics and expelled from the see of Alexandria for having defended piety with boldness... After having criticized and refuted the impiety of the heretics, Liberius was exiled to Berea, a city in Thrace. But the people of Rome, who trusted and loved him, approached the emperor, asking for him, wherefore he was sent back to Rome, and having governed his flock well, he died... [PG 117: 608]

H. Delehaye, who published an edition of the Synaxarion of Constantinople, showed that some of the manuscripts commemorate Liberius on August 27, in terms similar to that of Basil Porphyrogenitus. [A.S. 67: 927-30]

A late *Life* of Athanasius composed in Greek also depicts Liberius as a saint. [*Vita S. Athanasii ex Metaphraste*. PG 25: CCXL]

The Coptic Synaxarion includes a commemoration of “St. Liberius, Pope of Rome,” for the month 9 Babe, or October 6. [PO 1: 324-7; Arabic version in CSCO 78 (*Arab*. 12): 60]

The Ethiopian Synaxarion commemorates Liberius on 9 Teqemt, with this notice:

On this day, the holy father Liberius, patriarch of the city of Rome died. This saint was a just man, excellent and pure... He fulfilled the whole law and doctrine of the Church. He was chosen and consecrated patriarch of the city of Rome. When he was seated on the see of the apostle Peter, head of the apostles, he followed a good course and pleased God the Most High... [PO 44: 37]

The Ethiopian Synaxarion also commemorates Liberius on 4 Paguemen [September 10]. Although the text contains historical errors, and seems to confuse Pope Liberius with Pope Julius in some respects, it includes these remarks:

...the holy father Liberius, patriarch of the city of Rome. This saint was given charge of the city of Rome in the days of [Emperor] Constantius, son of Constantin. When Constantine [sic], his brother, had driven St. Athanasius the apostolic away from his see of the city of Alexandria, he also drove out St. Paul, patriarch of the city of Constantinople... [the emperor] went to the city of Rome; with him he had the monastic superiors and archpriests; they asked him to bring the Father Liberius back from exile, to the see of his charge, in the city of Rome. He accepted their requests and ordered that he [Liberius] resume possession of his charge. When this Father returned from exile, he sat upon the see with which he was entrusted; continually he instructed his flock, so that it would be firm in the orthodox faith... He battled with the supporters of Arius, anathematized them and excommunicated them, until he [Liberius] died... [PO 9: 457-8]

Chapter V

Acts of the Early Popes [366-440]

According to Sulpitius Severus, Priscillian was an educated, eloquent Spanish layman from a rich and noble family, who became the focus of a Gnostic “revival” in Spain. Priscillian’s movement was even endorsed by two bishops, Instantius and Salvianus. [*Historia Sacra* II, 46. PL 20: 155-6]

Hyginus, bishop of Cordova, denounced Priscillian to Ydatius, bishop of Merida. The case was submitted to a council at Saragossa. In early October 380, the council decreed eight canons condemning the eccentricities of the Priscillians.

When Priscillian, thanks to his two bishop friends Instantius and Salvianus, was ordained bishop of Avila, his supporters went on the offensive against their metropolitan, Ydatius of Merida, lodging a formal accusation against him before the Spanish bishops. Not to be outdone, Ydatius wrote to Emperor Gratian and obtained a counter-rescript against the heretics. Priscillian and his bishop friends decided to go to Rome, “to clear themselves before Damasus.” [*Hist. Sacra* II, 47-8. PL 20: 156]

The *Liber ad Damasum Episcopum* contains the Priscillians’ plea before Pope Damasus. Professing to prefer “the judgment of the saints” to a secular one, Priscillian’s adherents declared, “we have come to Rome, desiring only one thing, to see you [Damasus] in the first place,” so as to submit “a *libellus* explaining the facts of the case, and, what is greater, the Catholic faith in which we live... to you, who are the eldest of us all, who have come to the glory of the Apostolic See by the exhortation of Blessed Peter...” [CSEL 18: 34, 41]

Priscillian asked Damasus either to grant a hearing or summon Ydatius to Rome to prove the charges against Priscillian. At the very least,

Keys Over the Christian World

Priscillian requested that Damasus write to the Spanish bishops, so that they should call a council to reexamine the case. [CSEL 18: 42-3]

Sulpicius Severus writes that when Priscillian and his companions were not allowed to see Damasus they went to Milan, and obtained a cancellation of the rescript against them. Returning to Spain, they stirred up more trouble against their leading opponent, Bishop Ithacius of Ossanova in Lusitania. [PL 20: 156-7]

Priscillian's career was short-lived: he was condemned to death in the 380s.

Early Papal Decretals

A decretal is a papal letter composed with the intention of legislating for entire provinces. One such letter is called *Ad Gallos*, or "Canons of the Romans to the bishops of Gaul." *Ad Gallos* was once widely attributed either to Pope Siricius [384-399], Innocent I [401-417], or a Roman synod [c. 400?]. More recently, however, E.C. Babut argued that the decretal should be attributed to Pope Damasus. [*La Plus Ancienne Decretale*, Paris 1904]

The letter congratulated the bishops for having consulted the Roman Church, noting: "Your Holinesses have deigned to inquire about the knowledge of the law and traditions, [from] the authority of the Apostolic See." Promising "to correct all the discrepancies or diversities that arrogance alone has presumed [to create]," the letter urged the bishops to heed its words. [PL 13: 1182]

The first inquiry had been about women who had received the veil of a nun, and failed to keep their vow of chastity. The letter required that they submit to penance. Even younger girls who had not yet received the veil, but had failed to keep their proposal of chastity, were required to do suitable penance. [PL 13: 1182-4]

The decretal insisted on continence for the clergy, "through whose hands the grace of baptism is delivered, and the body of Christ is conformed."

It is not just ourselves, but Sacred Scripture that compels them to be utterly chaste, the letter continued, asking how the clergy could preach chastity without practicing it themselves. The clergy must practice continual continence, the letter noted, because they must always be ready to administer baptism and offer sacrifice. [PL 13: 1184-5]

“The Roman Church,” the letter declared, “especially keeps this observance,” that if a young child has been baptized and maintained integrity of the body, he can be admitted to the clergy; if an older man has been baptized and remained chaste, and is the husband of one wife, he too can be admitted to the clergy, but not those who have fallen into fornication. [PL 13: 1187]

Apostolic discipline, the decretal noted, calls for one confession of faith among the Catholic bishops: if there is one faith, there should also be one tradition; if there is one tradition, then one discipline should be kept throughout all the Churches. Different churches, the letter noted, have indeed been established in different regions, but the Church is one all over the world, by the unity of the Catholic faith. [PL 13: 1187-8]

It was customary, the letter observed, that priests and deacons administer “the remission of sins,” or baptism, at Easter time. However, priests had the faculty of baptizing outside of Easter time, a faculty not granted to deacons. [PL 13: 1188]

The letter listed impediments to holy orders: for example, those who officiated in secular tribunals, or who served in the military after baptism, could not be ordained; it also warned against simony and partiality in conferring orders. [PL 13: 1190-91]

The decretal enjoined that laymen not be promoted directly to the episcopate, and that bishops not migrate from church to church. Clerics cast out by their own bishop were not to be allowed to minister in another church, let alone be promoted. Any bishop who would promote such a cleric was to be excluded both from Catholic fellowship and communion with the Apostolic See. The pope declared it illegal for a bishop to promote

a layman excommunicated by his bishop, or invade another church and perform ordinations there. If these canons were faithfully observed, the letter concluded, the Church would not be troubled by heresies or schisms, and the Gentiles would say that “Christ our Lord is truly in us, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, unto ages of ages.” [PL 13: 1193–4]

Pope St. Siricius [384–399]

A Spanish bishop, Himerius, had submitted a consultation on various disciplinary questions to Pope Damasus. The letter was answered by Damasus’ successor, Siricius, who began:

Taking into account my office, it is not for me— on whom it is incumbent that there should be a zeal for the Christian religion greater than that of all other persons—to dissemble and remain silent. I bear the burdens of all who are heavily laden, yea rather in me that burden is borne by the blessed apostle Peter, who, we trust, in all things protects and has regard to us who are the heirs of his government... [PL 13: 1182–3]

Certain Spanish bishops were rebaptizing converts from Arianism, “which is illicit, as the apostle forbids it [cf. Eph. 4, 5] and it goes against the canons,” the pope noted, adding that after the Council of Rimini, Pope Liberius had sent “general decrees throughout the provinces” prohibiting rebaptism. Such converts were to be reconciled by imposition of the bishop’s hand, and invocation of the sevenfold Spirit, as was the practice of east and west, the pope wrote, adding: “from this path you must not deviate, if you do not want to be separated in mind from our synodal college.” [PL 13: 1133–4]

Certain clergy were baptizing on Christmas, the Epiphany, or even feasts of apostles and martyrs. The pope forbade this custom; solemn baptism was to be conferred on Easter or Pentecost, after at least forty days of preparation. The pope allowed exceptions for children and those in danger

of death, but warned:

Let the errors which up to now were committed in this regard suffice: now let all bishops, who are unwilling to be torn from the solidity of the apostolic rock, upon which Christ built the universal Church, hold to the above-mentioned rule. [PL 13: 1134–6]

The pope also decreed that Christians who returned to idol worship were to be excommunicated, and that the clergy who refused to observe continence within marriage were to be deprived of their dignity “by the authority of the Apostolic See,” never to handle the sacred mysteries again. [PL 13: 1136–40]

Reaffirming certain other canons about ordinations, the pope wrote, “By a general pronouncement we decree what, from now on, is to be followed by all the Churches, and what is to be avoided...” Bishops who ignored the canons, the letter notes, would merit “an appropriate sentence to be pronounced by the Apostolic See.” [PL 13: 1142, 1146]

Concluding that he had sufficiently answered the consultations Himerius had submitted “to the Roman Church as head of your body,” the pope urged him to observe the canons and decretal constitutions. Himerius was directed to pass on the instructions to other Spanish provinces, including Carthagera, Baetica, Lusitania, and Galicia, because “no bishop of the Lord is free to be ignorant of the statutes of the Apostolic See, or the venerable definitions of the canons.” [PL 13: 1146]

The pope also wrote decretal letters to Africa, about rules for ordinations, and others to the bishops of Gaul and Italy. In his response to the Africans, St. Siricius noted that the bishops had met at the relics of the blessed apostle Peter, “through whom both the apostleship and the episcopate received their origin in Christ.” [PL 13: 1155]

The pope reaffirmed several canons: nobody was to ordain without the knowledge of the primate. One bishop alone could not ordain another

bishop. Whoever entered the military after baptism could not join the clergy. Nobody who married a widow could enter the clergy. No bishop could presume to ordain a cleric of another church. A church could not receive a cleric thrown out of another church. Converts from the Montanists and Novatians were to be received not by rebaptism, but by the imposition of hands. Priests and deacons were to observe continence with their wives. [PL 13: 1155 sq.]

In another decretal Siricius, noting that “it has come to the knowledge of the Apostolic See that certain things are presumed to be done against the ecclesiastical rule,” invoked his responsibility for all the churches. He insisted that unworthy men not be promoted to the episcopate, and that recent converts or laymen not be promoted directly to the priesthood. [PL 13: 1164]

The Case of Jovinian

When a former monk named Jovinian denied that virginity was superior to marriage, and denied the virginity of the Blessed Virgin Mary *in partu*, or in giving birth to Christ, the pope condemned these doctrines and their authors, casting them out of the Church. St. Ambrose, bishop of Milan, and his synod responded by letter, writing:

In the letter of Your Holiness we have recognized the watchfulness of the Good Shepherd, who diligently guards the door entrusted to you, and guards the flock of Christ with pious solicitude, worthy to be heard and followed by Christ’s sheep... [Ep. 42. PL 16: 1124]

About 390, the pope was informed of a bishop, Bonosus, who had dared to assert that the Blessed Virgin Mary had had other children besides Christ. Siricius was willing to refer this case to an upcoming council of Capua. [PL 13: 1176-8]

Pope Siricius and the East

According to Severus of Antioch, the council of Capua also examined the case of an eastern bishop, Isaiah, who had been irregularly ordained. Isaiah is not otherwise identified. Severus writes that after examination of the case at Capua, Siricius decided to entrust the responsibility for a more precise inquiry to the easterners themselves. [Ed. E.W. Brooks. *The Sixth Book of the Select Letters...* 1: 223–4]

In 1885, L. Duchesne published a fragment containing records of a council held in Constantinople, on September 29, 394. Two bishops, Bagadios and Agapios, were disputing for the see of Bostra, metropolis of Arabia. The contestants submitted the case to Pope Siricius, who referred the case to Theophilus of Alexandria. [*The Churches Separated from Rome*, English Ed. Benziger 1907, 136]

Duchesne also discovered a long lost treatise by the deacon Pelagius, who became Pope Pelagius I [556–560], which alludes to this incident. According to the treatise, published in 1932 by R. Devreesse, Bishops Nectarius of Constantinople, Theophilus of Alexandria, and Flavian of Antioch were involved in the dispute. “Bagadius and Agapius,” according to Pelagius, were “disputing for the episcopate of the church of Bostra, which is the metropolis of Arabia, so long that they went to Rome, and from there they were sent to the holy Theophilus, with letters of the blessed Pope Siricius.” [*Pelagii Diaconi Ecclesiae Romanae In Defensione Trium Capitulorum*, Vatican City 1932, 9]

St. Anastasius I [399–401]

Under St. Siricius’ successor Anastasius I [399–401], controversy broke out owing to the translation of Origen’s *De Principiis* by the priest Rufinus of Aquileia. Origen had speculated that the pains of hell might not be eternal, and that all beings, including the damned themselves, would be saved in the *apokatastasis* or final restoration. With accusations of heresy flying fast and furious, Rufinus offered a *libellus* to Pope Anastasius, pleading that he—Rufinus—had merely *translated* the work, not *approved its doctrine*. [Coustant, 715 sq.]

The pope addressed the issue in a response to John, bishop of Jerusalem, about 400. Should Rufinus be condemned? That depended on the reason for the translation. If Rufinus had intended to *refute* the doctrines of Origen, Anastasius approved. If, on the other hand, Rufinus was attempting to promote the doctrines of Origen, *that*, the pope warned, merited condemnation:

God keep this from the Catholic discipline of the Roman Church... Care shall certainly not be lacking, on my part, to guard the faith of the Gospel among my people, and as far as I can, to communicate by letter with the parts of my body throughout the various regions of the earth, lest any profane interpretation begin to creep in... [PL 20: 71-2]

Jerome's Challenge: "What faith does Rufinus call his own?"

The monk Jerome, who had become secretary to the late Pope Damasus, and frequently had to answer synodical consultations from east and west, [Ep. 123] was involved in the controversy. St. Jerome wrote against Rufinus:

What faith does Rufinus call his own? Is it the faith that waxes strongly in the Roman Church, or the one contained in the books of Origen? If he answers, "the Roman," then we are Catholics. [*Contra Rufinum* I, 4]

Theophilus, bishop of Alexandria, had strongly opposed Origenism. Writing to the "most blessed pope of Alexandria," Jerome thanked him for some admonitions about the canons, assuring Theophilus that he, Jerome, had always been "mindful of the Roman faith praised by the Apostle's mouth, which the Alexandrian Church boasts of sharing." [Ep. 63. PL 22: 607]

Jerome praised two great bishops of Alexandria, Athanasius and Peter, recalling that "they had taken refuge at Rome, as in a most safe harbor of their communion." In another letter Jerome wrote, "Hold the faith of the holy [Pope] Innocent... do not receive a foreign doctrine, however prudent

and clever it may seem to you.” [Epp. 127, 130. PL 22: 1090, 1120]

Innocent I [401–417]

Anastasius’ successor, Innocent I [401–417] wrote on February 15, 404, to Victricius, bishop of Rouen. Congratulating him for having consulted “the norm and authority of the Roman Church,” the pope offered a series of disciplines for the right ordering of Christian life, directing Victricius to communicate them to neighboring bishops and churches, and adding: “let us begin, therefore, with the help of the holy apostle Peter, through whom both the apostleship and the episcopate received their origin in Christ.” [PL 20: 469–70]

The pope noted that he was not imposing new precepts, but reaffirming statutes that had originated by authority of the apostles and Fathers. He reviewed the canons about ordinations: no bishop was to ordain another [bishop] without the knowledge of the metropolitan; nor should one bishop presume to ordain another by himself, “for this was established and defined in the Council of Nicea.” Anybody who, after baptism, had joined the military could not be admitted into the clergy. Disputes among clergy were to be settled by a provincial council, in accordance with the Council of Nicea; more important cases, or *causae maiores*, were to be referred to the Apostolic See. The pope reminded Victricius that bishops must not ordain clerics of another diocese without permission from the local bishop. [PL 20: 471–3]

Individuals returning from the Novatians and Montanists, the pope continued, were to be received by the imposition of hands only, because they had been baptized in Christ’s name, “albeit by heretics.” On the other hand, individuals who left the Church and allowed themselves to be rebaptized by these sects were to be readmitted only through long penitential satisfaction. [PL 20: 475]

Even married clergy, the pope decreed, must observe continence, and much more was this the case with monks who accepted ordination. Even virgins who, without actually receiving the veil, merely *promised* to

live in perpetual chastity, and then broke their promise, were required to do some penance. [PL 20: 475 sq.]

The Church in Spain

About 404, Innocent wrote to the Synod of Toledo, praising two Spanish clerics, the bishop Hilary and the priest Elpidius who had made their way to the Apostolic See, and there, “in the very bosom of the faith,” had bemoaned the disturbance of the peace within the province, neglect of the canons, and other afflictions within the Church in Spain. [PL 20: 486]

Two bishops, Symphosius and Dictinius, who had fallen into the heresy of Priscillianism, had been received back into communion with papal approval. A council at Zaragoza, possibly in 395, had requested the mediation of Ambrose of Milan and the pope, who determined the conditions for reconciliation. At the council of Toledo, in 400, Symphosius and his friends abjured their errors, and were received on the condition that the present pope [Anastasius I] and the bishop of Milan agreed. In spite of that, certain bishops protested against this reconciliation and broke communion with bishops who had received back the heretics. Pope Innocent condemned this schism, urging the dissidents to accept the reconciliation of the Priscillians; those who resisted this reconciliation faced excommunication themselves. [PL 20: 486–90. Cf. SA, 179 sq; Mansi 3: 1006]

Two bishops, Minucius and Rufus, had performed ordinations illegally, violating the rights of metropolitans. The pope declared that those who had been ordained illegally should not retain their promotions. There had been so many illicit ordinations, he remarked, that leaving them to God’s judgment, he granted a certain amnesty for the time being. For the future, however, he decreed that bishops guilty of such offenses were to be deposed, and that the canons of Nicea about ordinations be observed. [PL 20: 489–91]

The Church in Gaul

In 405, Innocent wrote to Exsuperius, bishop of Toulouse, praising

his correspondent for having consulted the Apostolic See in doubtful matters and answering his queries. Exsuperius had asked about clergy who failed to observe continence. The response was that Pope Siricius had already decreed that such clergy were to be deposed, if they had been informed of Siricius' legislation and ignored it. [PL 20: 495–8]

Exsuperius also had asked about people who spent their entire lives in incontinence, and requested penance and communion at the very end. In times of persecution, the pope replied, penance was indeed granted but communion was denied lest an easy grant of communion fail to convert the lapsed, but now, in a time of peace for the Church, both penance and communion should be granted, “lest we appear to follow the harshness and hardness of Novatian, who denied pardon.” [PL 20: 498–9]

Asked why men separated from adulterous wives, while women appeared to stay with adulterous husbands, the pope replied that the Christian religion condemns adultery equally in *either* sex, but that men were more inclined to denounce adulterous wives, resulting in the denial of communion to such women. [PL 20: 499–500]

The pope had been asked about people who divorced their spouse and entered another marriage. Both parties in such a union are guilty of adultery, he answered, and must be cut off from communion. Finally, the pope gave Exsuperius a list of canonical books. [PL 20: 500–502]

The Letter to Decentius

In 416 Pope Innocent wrote to Decentius, bishop of Gubbio, that because western churches had no other apostle to evangelize them, they ought to accept the tradition of Peter preserved at Rome:

For who is unaware, or has failed to notice, that *what was handed down to the Roman Church by Peter, prince of the apostles, and is still observed to this day, ought to be observed by all*, neither should anything be... introduced, that lacks authority, or might appear to rely on precedent from someplace else?

Keys Over the Christian World

This is particularly clear in so far as nobody else has established churches in all Italy, the provinces of Gaul, the Spanish provinces, Africa and Sicily and the islands lying in between, except those whom the venerable apostle Peter or his successors established as bishops. Or let them read, whether in these provinces another apostle has been shown or recorded to have taught. If they do not read about any, for they never can find any, it behooves them to follow what the Roman Church observes, from which they undoubtedly received their origin, lest as they strive to learn foreign pronouncements, they appear to neglect the head of their institutions. [PL 20: 552]

The pope urged Decentius to pass on these instructions, either as a “greater authority,” or in case anybody was ignorant of Roman tradition, introduced novelties, or believed that another tradition should be followed. [PL 20: 553]

The pope began with instructions about the sacred mysteries of the liturgy. The kiss of peace and recitation of the names were to take place after the offering of the oblation itself, or in other words after the “prayer” during which the sacrifice occurs. [PL 20: 553]

Confirmation of children, the pope added, was reserved for bishops: although presbyters or ‘simple priests’ are indeed priests of the second rank, they do not have the summit of the priesthood; only bishops may deliver the Holy Spirit by anointing the forehead with chrism, as is shown not only by ecclesiastical custom, but also by the Acts of the Apostles, where Peter and John were sent to confer the Holy Spirit upon the baptized. The pope declined, however, to give the sacramental form. [PL 20: 554-5]

The pope also justified Saturday fasting by scriptural arguments, and decreed that the reconciliation of penitents took place on Holy Thursday, as the custom of the Roman Church demonstrated. Priests were to take into account the gravity of the penitent’s sins and the intensity of his contrition, and absolve him when due satisfaction had been given. However,

seriously ailing penitents were to receive absolution even before paschal time, lest they leave the world without communion. [PL 20: 555-6, 559]

The pope also wrote to Felix, bishop of Nucera, praising him for having followed the institutions of the ancients, and referring his questions “to us as to the head and apex of the episcopate, so that the Apostolic See, having been consulted, may out of doubtful matters themselves pronounce what is certain and what must be observed.” [PL 20: 603]

The pope reiterated familiar principles about the need to ordain suitable candidates, and to refrain from ordaining men excluded by the canons, such as men who had married twice or voluntarily mutilated themselves. In other letters, the pope decreed that priests who had fathered children after ordination were to be removed, defended the indissolubility of marriage, urged vigilance against heresy, and prohibited bishops from interfering in dioceses of other bishops. [PL 20: 603 sq.]

St. Zosimus I [417-418]

When Pope Innocent died in March 417, his successor, Zosimus, made a major change in the Church in Gaul. On March 22, he wrote to the bishops of Gaul, granting extraordinary privileges to Patroclus, bishop of Arles. “It has pleased the Apostolic See,” the pope wrote, that clerics of any rank coming to Rome from Gaul must have *litterae formatae*, canonical letters of recognition from Patroclus, otherwise they “absolutely cannot be received by us.” The pope added that he had informed all quarters of this order, “so that all regions may realize that what we establish is altogether to be observed,” warning: “if anybody attempts to violate these beneficially established constitutions, let him know that, of his own volition he is separated from our communion.” [PL 20: 642-3]

The next paragraph gave the metropolitan of Arles, “as he has always had,” authority regarding ordinations in *three* different provinces: the Viennoise, and First and Second Narbonnaise. Whoever dares to give or receive ordination in these provinces without the consent of the bishop of Arles is deposed from the priesthood, Zosimus declared, asserting that he

Keys Over the Christian World

was confirming immemorial privileges held by the Church of Arles since the time of Trophimus, a bishop sent from Rome, from whose mission, attributed to the most distant antiquity, the Catholic faith had spread throughout Gaul. [PL 20: 644-5]

For decades, Arles had been growing in civil importance; it had even become the seat of an imperial prefecture. In the ecclesiastical hierarchy, Arles belonged to the province of Viennoise, whose metropolis was Vienne. The Council of Turin [c. 400] had proposed an arrangement in which each city—Arles and Vienne— would share metropolitan rights over the cities closer to its immediate vicinity. Now, thanks to Pope Zosimus, the see of Arles had secured the primacy in Gaul. [Cf. Mansi 3: 861]

In September, the pope disciplined two bishops ordained without the approval of Patroclus. Writing to bishops throughout Africa, Gaul and Spain, Zosimus, citing numerous irregularities, announced that the bishops, Ursus and Tuentius, were illicitly ordained and could not be admitted to communion. [PL 20: 661-5]

When Hilary, bishop of Narbonne, wrote asserting his rights to ordain bishops in First Narbonnaise, the pope replied on September 26, 417. Citing the mission of St. Trophimus, Zosimus declared that the right to ordain bishops in Viennoise and First and Second Narbonnaise belonged to the bishop of Arles. Invoking the authority of the Apostolic See and his own recent “most evident definition,” Pope Zosimus, under pain of excommunication, deprived Hilary of the right of ordaining bishops in First Narbonnaise. [PL 20: 667-8]

Two other metropolitans incurred the pope’s displeasure: Proculus of Marseilles and Simplicius of Vienne. Zosimus wrote to their provinces in late September, outraged that Proculus, in denigration of the Apostolic See, had cited the authority of the Council of Turin and that Simplicius of Vienne had shown similar “impudence” by ordaining bishops in Viennoise. In the name of antiquity, for which the decrees of the Fathers required reverent observance, Pope Zosimus asserted that Proculus and Simplicius had violated the statutes of the Fathers and the reverence due to Trophimus, first

metropolitan of Arles sent by the Apostolic See. On September 29, the pope wrote to Patroclus, reaffirming rights that Patroclus enjoyed in Gaul by the authority of the Apostolic See. [PL 20: 665 sq.]

In March 418, Pope Zosimus reaffirmed the extensive authority that Patroclus enjoyed “by pronouncement of the Apostolic See.” The pope also wrote to the clergy and people of Marseilles, entrusting them to the care of Patroclus until they received a new bishop. [PL 20: 673-5]

Meanwhile, answering a consultation from Hesychius, bishop of Salona, who in the pope’s words had called for “a precept of the Apostolic See,” Zosimus reminded him that candidates for orders, whether monks or laymen, must pass through the usual grades and canonical intervals. Surprised that the “statutes of the Apostolic See” had not reached Hesychius, Zosimus directed him to pass on these instructions to the bishops of the neighboring provinces, declaring that whoever ignored “the authority of the Fathers and of the Apostolic See” were subject to severe punishment, and even in danger of losing their rank. [PL 20: 670-73]

Some of the Roman clergy, evidently unhappy with the pope’s policies, had fled to the imperial court at Ravenna. On October 3, 418 Pope Zosimus wrote, threatening severe penalties against them. [PL 20: 679-80]

On November 16, 418, the pope wrote to reprimand the bishops of the African province Byzacena. Not only had lay people been allowed to be *present* in ecclesiastical trials, he complained, they had even acted as *judges*. The pope was amazed that the bishops could have shown so little respect for the honor of the episcopate. [PL 20: 683-6]

Boniface I [418-422]

When Pope Zosimus died in late 418, he was succeeded by the priest Boniface, who first had to overcome a vigorous challenge by the archdeacon Eulalius. On June 13, 419, the new pope wrote to the bishops of Gaul about the case of Maximus, bishop of Valencia, who was under

suspicion of heresy and other extremely serious crimes. The pope called for a provincial synod to judge the case of Maximus, adding: “Whatever Your Charity decide in this case, it is necessary that it be confirmed by our authority, as is fitting.” [PL 20: 756–8]

The pope also restored the rights of metropolitans in Gaul, repealing the vicariate at Arles. When Patroclus ordained a new bishop for the vacant see of Lodeve, the people asked Rome to intervene. On February 9, 422, the pope wrote to Metropolitan Hilary of Narbonne, declaring it unacceptable that a bishop be ordained without the consent of the metropolitan, and by a bishop of another province; such proceedings clearly violated the constitutions of Nicea. The pope directed the bishop of Narbonne to go to Lodeve, “armed with the right of a metropolitan and supported by our commands,” ordain a bishop in accordance with the rules of the fathers, and send a report to the Apostolic See. Each province had its own metropolitan, added Boniface, who wanted to hear no more about the presumption of those who wanted to extend their dignity beyond what was permissible. So much for the vicariate at Arles. [PL 20: 772–4]

The Appeals Process Abused: the Case of Apiarius

According to early fifth-century African councils, the priest Apiarius had been excommunicated by his bishop, Urbanus of Sicca, for various unknown offenses. Apiarius went to Rome and appealed to Pope Zosimus, who called for the priest’s reinstatement. The pope went so far as to threaten Urbanus with excommunication unless the sentence against Apiarius were amended.

In May 418 there was a general council of the African bishops, of which canon 17 prohibited priests, deacons, or lower clergy from appealing to Rome. Hefele believes that this canon was a reaction to the appeal of Apiarius on the part of the African bishops. [Op. cit. 2: 463]

An African synodal letter of 419 reveals that Pope Zosimus had sent as legates to Carthage Faustinus, bishop of Potentina, and the priests Philip and Asellus. Aurelius, primate of Carthage, held a council, still in 418.

As a notary read the decrees of the Council of Nicea, the Roman legate Faustinus interjected:

Some things have been enjoined on us, by the Apostolic See, in writing and also in [our] orders, which had to be handled with Your Beatitude, as we have also recalled in the earlier acts. They have to do with the canons of Nicea, that their constitution and custom may be preserved, for some of them are held by way of order and canon, while others have been confirmed by custom. If it is agreeable to Your Beatitude, let us deal with these things first: and later the other things which have been done or begun shall be recorded in the acts and signed, so that by your replies you may be able to inform the Apostolic See, and that it may be clear to the venerable pope that we have admonished you, although the relevant headings have already been included in the acts. Let the *commonitorium* therefore come to the forefront, so that Your Beatitude may know what is contained in it, and respond to each point. [CSEL 149: 90]

Under insistent questioning, the legates revealed their written instructions or *commonitorium*, which had instructed them to handle four points with the synod:

1. Appeals of bishops to Rome.
2. The excessive number of bishops travelling to see imperial officials.
3. Cases of priests or deacons unjustly excommunicated by their own bishops, which were to be handled by neighboring bishops.
4. Urbanus of Sicca was to be excommunicated or summoned to Rome if he did not amend the sentence against Apiarius. [CSEL 149: 90–91]

According to Pope Zosimus, the canon about appeals of bishops to Rome had been decreed “in the Council of Nicea.” As the canon was read,

Keys Over the Christian World

Alypius, bishop of Tagaste, said:

We have already written about this in previous letters of our council [a year earlier], and we profess that we shall observe what was established in the Council of Nicea [sic]. Yet it moves me that when we examined the Greek copies of this Synod of Nicea, we didn't find this [canon] there at all— I don't know why. [CSEL 149: 91]

Alypius asked that his primate, Aurelius, make inquiries with the bishops of Constantinople, Alexandria and Antioch for authentic copies of the canons of Nicea, and added: “as I said before, however, we profess that we shall observe these [i.e., the appeals legislation cited by Zosimus] for the moment, until integral copies [of the Nicene canons] arrive.” Finally, Alypius suggested that Boniface, the venerable bishop of Rome, also be petitioned to make similar inquiries. Faustinus thought it preferable that Pope Boniface make the inquiry alone, “lest contention appear to be arising between the churches.” [CSEL 149: 91–2]

Why hadn't the Africans found, in their copies of the canons of Nicea, the canon about appeals cited by Pope Zosimus? For a very good reason: the canon had been passed by the Council of *Sardica*. A comedy of errors was well under way: while the Romans didn't recognize the difference between the canons of Nicea and Sardica, the Africans didn't know this Sardican canon at all. [The manuscripts used by Pope Zosimus had evidently included the canons of Nicea and Sardica under one title, that of Nicea, which explains the pope's error. In Africa, the acts of the Council of Sardica were either forgotten or unknown. Cf. Hefele 2: 464]

Novatus, a bishop from Mauretania Sitifensis, called for the reading of another canon cited by Pope Zosimus— canon 17 of Sardica. This canon stipulated that if a bishop was moved by haste or bitterness to expel a priest or deacon, the ousted cleric could appeal to the neighboring bishops, lest an innocent man be condemned. [CSEL 149: 92]

When the canon was read, Augustine, bishop of Hippo, said: “We

also profess that we shall observe this [canon], without prejudice to a more diligent inquiry into the [canons of the] Council of Nicea.” Queried by the primate Aurelius, the bishops declared: “everything laid down in the Council of Nicea is agreeable to us.” [CSEL 149: 93]

The African bishops also enacted a canon that allowed priests, deacons and lower clergy to appeal not only to neighboring bishops, but also to primates of their provinces, or to African councils. On the other hand, clerics who appealed overseas were not to be received into communion by anybody in Africa. [CSEL 149: 109–110]

Boniface I and the Case of Apiarius

When Pope Zosimus died in late 418, his successor, Boniface I [418–422], inherited the case of Apiarius. On May 31, 419, another African council wrote to Pope Boniface, informing him that the priest Apiarius, about whose ordination and excommunication and appeal “no light scandal” had arisen throughout the African Church, had asked forgiveness for his mistakes and had been restored to communion. While Apiarius had not been allowed to function as a priest in the church of Sicca, he *had* received letters authorizing him to function anywhere else he liked. [CSEL 149: 157]

As for the two “canons of Nicea”— actually Sardican canons— cited by Pope Zosimus, the African bishops informed the pope that they had already agreed to observe them, pending the investigation about the canons of Nicea. The letter continued:

And now we ask Your Holiness to cause them [the disputed canons] to be kept by us as they were laid down or established by the Fathers at Nicea [sic], and to enforce among you, over there, those which [the legates] brought in the *commonitorium*... [CSEL 149: 158]

The disputed canons, the bishops wrote, had been inserted into the acts of the most accurate copies of the Council of Nicea, “until authentic copies of the Council of Nicea are brought.” Before reminding the pope of

the importance of examining the canons according to the Greek text, the African bishops added:

If [these canons] would be kept, in the same order, by you and in Italy as they were laid down and as they are contained in the *commonitorium*, which our brethren sent by the Apostolic See cited, we would not be compelled to bear what we prefer not to bring up again, or put up with the intolerable. But we believe that, with the help of the mercy of the Lord our God, with Your Holiness presiding over the Roman Church, we shall no longer suffer from this insolence... [CSEL 149: 159-60]

The Letter “Optaremus”

One other document reveals the outcome of the case of Apiarius: the letter *Optaremus* from an African Council to Pope Celestine I [422-432]. The letter depicts considerable dissatisfaction, on the part of the African bishops, with the behavior of the legate Faustinus, with the scandal caused by the case of Apiarius, and in general with the problems generated by overseas appeals.

Apiarius had been allowed to function at the church of Thabraca, where the people made serious accusations against him. The African bishops complain that Faustinus, the Roman legate, had come to the defense of Apiarius, resisted and even insulted the council, and further, “as if asserting the privileges of the Roman Church,” had tried to restore Apiarius to communion. Faustinus apparently believed that Apiarius had appealed, and that Celestine had restored Apiarius: “which he [Faustinus] could not prove,” the Africans remarked. [CSEL 149: 169]

The argument over the innocence or guilt of Apiarius was resolved unexpectedly: the accused priest broke down and confessed his sins, which according to the bishops were extremely serious and shameful. The letter continued:

...we beseech you that henceforth you not give a hearing so easily to those who come from here, or, in the future, receive into communion those excommunicated by us, because your Reverence can see easily that this has even been defined by the Council of Nicea. For although its provision seems to concern the lower clergy and lay people, how much more did it wish this to be observed with regard to bishops, lest those who are suspended from communion in their own province appear to be restored to communion by Your Holiness too hastily, or unduly.

And let Your Holiness, as is worthy of you, repulse also the infamous appeals of priests and other clergy, because this has not been derogated from the African church by any definition of the fathers, and because the decrees of Nicea plainly committed lower ranking clergy and bishops themselves to their metropolitans... especially everybody is permitted, if he is offended by the judgment of the examiners, to appeal to councils of his province or even to universal [councils of Africa]: unless perhaps there is anybody who believes that our God can inspire justice in examination to any one man, and deny it to countless bishops gathered in council. Or how shall the very judgment given overseas have validity, to which the necessary witnesses cannot be brought, because of the infirmity of gender, or old age, or many other impediments...? [CSEL 149: 171]

The African bishops expressed one more set of complaints, on the subject of the Roman legates:

For that any should be sent [as legates] from Your Holiness' side, we have not [sic] found to be established in any synod of the fathers... And do not send, do not grant clerics as executors to any who ask for them, lest we appear to introduce the fumes of worldly pride into the light of the church of Christ... as for our brother Faustinus... we are

certain that, given the rectitude and moderation of Your Holiness, Africa will suffer from him no longer... [CSEL 149: 172]

What are we to make of this outburst? Dom John Chapman, known for his loyalty to the papacy, characterized the letter as “too strong in its expressions, as it is certainly one-sided in its arguments.” [*Studies on the Early Papacy*, 204]

Yet Chapman admitted that the Africans had legitimate grievances with abuses in the appeals process. Not only had Pope Zosimus been prepared to overturn the condemnation of Apiarius, he had even threatened Apiarius’ bishop, Urbanus of Sicca, with excommunication! The case of Apiarius showed the real scandal that could ensue when frivolous appeals were accepted, and legitimate decrees of the bishops were overruled without sufficient reason or efforts to hear both sides.

Celestine I [422-432]

In 428, Pope Celestine I wrote to the bishops of Vienne and Narbonne. Noting that he had been placed by God on a pastoral watchtower, the pope adverted to his duty to confirm appropriate observances, and restrain improper ones:

Our spiritual care fails not, however distant the regions, but extends wherever the name of God is preached: nor do those things which are attempted for the subversion of the canons, by the authority of novel presumption, escape our knowledge. [PL 50: 430]

The pope condemned certain abuses, and was particularly horrified that final reconciliation could be denied to the dying. Reminding the bishops that Christ had forgiven the good thief, Celestine made it clear that absolution must be given to the dying. [PL 50: 431-2]

The pope also reproved illicit ordinations, noting that laymen should

not be promoted to bishop, men of infamous life should not be promoted to orders, and provinces should be content with one metropolitan. [PL 50: 433–4]

The pope insisted again on the canons in a letter of 429 to the bishops of Apulia and Calabria. Declaring that no bishop was free to be ignorant of the canons, Celestine condemned the abuses of raising laymen and even soldiers directly to the episcopate, concluding with this warning:

Whoever shall have endeavored to attempt what is prohibited must know that the Apostolic See's condemnation will not be lacking. For what we do not correct by the mere authority of our admonition, we must necessarily punish by a severity proportionate to the canons. [PL 50: 437]

At Rome, an Extraordinary Visitor?

St. Gregory of Tours relates that in the late fourth century, St. Martin, bishop of Tours had to endure mockery from a priest named Briccius, who considered him insane. St. Martin predicted that Briccius would become the next bishop, but would have to endure great tribulation. Briccius did become the next bishop, but was falsely accused of adultery. As other bishops were intruded into his see, Briccius sought out the pope of Rome, told him everything that had happened, and wept for having abused St. Martin. Eventually Briccius was found innocent of adultery; the pope commanded him to return to Tours, and after several years Briccius left Rome, “with the authority of that pope,” and was able to recover his see. [*Hist. Franc.* Bk II, prol.; Bk X, 31. PL 71: 188–191, 565]

Appeal of Bachiarius

Some patristic collections include a text by a certain Bachiarius, which speaks of the Chair of Peter at Rome:

If, for the fault of one man, the generation of a whole province

Keys Over the Christian World

is to be anathematized, let there be condemned also that most blessed disciple, namely Rome, from which not one, but two or three or even more heresies have sprung up, and yet none of them was able to hold or to move the Chair of Peter, that is, the Seat of Faith... let us not delay to demonstrate the rule of our faith to Your Beatitude, who are the builder of that edifice. [PL 20: 1023-5]

Scholarly writers have speculated that Bacharius was a fifth-century monk from Spain, or even possibly from Ireland, but we are not aware of any ancient sources that identify him positively.

Chapter VI

The Vicariate at Thessalonica

Since the late fourth century, the bishop of Thessalonica had acted as papal vicar. This delegation of authority goes back to the time of Pope Damasus [366–384] or Siricius [384–399]. Pope Siricius had written to Anysius, bishop of Thessalonica, informing him that no ordinations were to take place in Illyricum without Anysius' knowledge. Anysius was instructed to prevent unworthy men from being made bishops, and enforce the canons of Nicea. [PL 13: 1148–9]

Pope Innocent I [401–417] entrusted the oversight of all the churches of Illyricum to Anysius in a letter written in 402. Innocent noted that his predecessors, Popes Anastasius, Siricius and Damasus had observed the custom of having a vicar at Thessalonica. [PL 20: 463–65]

In 412, Pope Innocent granted the position of vicar to Rufus, successor of Anysius in the see of Thessalonica. Noting that both Moses and the apostles had delegated part of their authority to others, the pope entrusted to Rufus the oversight of entire provinces of the east, including Achaia, Thessaly, Old and New Epirus, both Dacias, Moesia, Dardania and Praevalitana. [PL 20: 515–17]

Pope Boniface I [418–422]

Early in his pontificate, Boniface I [418–422] wrote to Rufus, making it clear that the churches of Macedonia and Achaia had been committed to that prelate's watch. The pope wrote:

The blessed apostle Peter, to whom the citadel of the priesthood was entrusted by the voice of the Lord, is

lifted with immense satisfaction whenever he sees that the honor granted him by the Lord is guarded by men of unblemished peace. What greater joy could he have, than to see that the rights pertaining to the authority he has received are preserved in their integrity? For any consultation sent by various parties, on whatever matter, that seeks the *arcanum* of that see which has evidently been established on a spiritual rock, truly requires an immovable foundation. [PL 20: 760]

Rufus had submitted to Rome the case of a bishop, Perigenes, who had been chosen by his colleagues as bishop of Patras, but the people had not accepted him. However, a council had nominated Perigenes as the new bishop of Corinth, where the people *did* want him. The pope wrote that Perigenes should go ahead and accept the see of Corinth. [PL 20: 760–61]

On September 19, 419, Pope Boniface wrote again to Rufus about the case of Perigenes. To judge from what Rufus had reported, the pope's directions had been widely accepted, although some had ignored them. Boniface praised the vigilance of Rufus, remarking: "As you yourself have indicated in your letters, the blessed apostle Peter looks upon you with his eyes, considering how you carry out the office of the supreme ruler. Nor can he be very far from you, who has been established as the perpetual pastor of the sheep of the Lord, or fail to care for a church no matter where it be located, he in whom we read that the foundation of the Universal Church has been placed." [PL 20: 761–2]

The pope reminded Rufus that the vicar must correct what has been done amiss, and straighten out whatever has been done haphazardly. Perigenes, the pope continued, was undoubtedly saddened when the people of Patras had refused to accept him, but when adversities befall good people, they turn out for the better. The pope repeated his wish that Perigenes be confirmed as bishop of Corinth. [PL 20: 763]

The case of Perigenes was cited at times by eastern historians to show that bishops could be transferred from one see to another. Socrates wrote that when the people of Patras did not accept Perigenes, "the bishop

of Rome commanded him to be enthroned in the metropolis of Corinth.” [HE VII, 36]

The medieval *Chronicle of Michael the Syrian* notes that “Perigenes of Patras, who had not been accepted by the people of the diocese, went to Corinth... on the order of the bishop of Rome.” [Bk VIII, 6. ed. Chabot, 2: 24]

The regime in Illyricum met with a challenge from Theodosius II, the eastern Roman Emperor. On July 14, 421, Theodosius, citing old custom and “the original ecclesiastical canons,” decreed that any questions arising in Illyricum should be referred to the judgment of the bishop of *Constantinople*, “which enjoys the prerogative of Old Rome,” and his priestly council; the edict was preserved in the Theodosian Code, an early fifth century compilation of Roman law. [Bk XVI, 2, 45. ed. Mommsen, *Theodosiani Libri XVI cum Constitutionibus Sirmondianis*, Vol. I: 2: 852]

At the pope’s request, Honorius, the western Roman Emperor, wrote to Theodosius; the letter was preserved with the epistles of Pope Boniface I. “Although we cannot refuse our intercession in any cases where our help is requested,” Honorius began, “we necessarily owe greater care and effort where the desires of the holy Apostolic See are contained.” Although our Empire is ever governed with the divine favor, he continued, “undoubtedly we owe a special veneration to the church of that city from which we both received the Roman Principality, and the priesthood received their beginning.” Honorius, referring to an embassy he had received from the Apostolic See, asked Theodosius to revoke the constitution about Illyricum, “so that the privileges, which have been long established by the Fathers, and have been observed up to our time, remain intact... lest the Roman Church lose, under Christian princes, what she had retained under other emperors.” [PL 20: 769-70]

For the moment Theodosius backed down. In his response, preserved among the epistles of Boniface I, Theodosius announced that he had sent directions to the pretorian prefects in Illyricum so that “the original apostolic discipline and the old canons” be restored, “lest the most holy,

Keys Over the Christian World

venerable Church of the City [Rome] lose the privileges established by the ancients.” [PL 20: 771]

The pope wrote to Rufus again in March 422, reminding him that “the blessed apostle Peter, in his stead, has entrusted everything to the Church of Thessalonica, that it may understand that the care for the many continues to rest upon it.” Urging Rufus to carry out his mission with diligence, the pope exhorted him to resist “violators of the canons and enemies of ecclesiastical law,” suggesting that “you have the blessed apostle Peter” to help in the struggle, and “that Fisherman does not allow the privilege of his see to perish, as you are laboring.” [PL 20: 774–5]

Noting that he had sent “letters full of threats and rebukes to the Thessalians,” the pope addressed specifics. About a synod planned to reconsider the case of Perigenes, the pope noted that in the first place, bishops should not be meeting at all without the knowledge of Rufus, and in the second place, “our judgment cannot be reconsidered, for it was never lawful to reconsider what was once established by the Apostolic See.” [PL 20: 775–6]

The pope wanted Rufus to hear the case of a bishop, Perreivius, who claimed to have suffered oppression from other bishops. Rufus was to send a report, “so that the judgment pronounced by Your Brotherhood may be confirmed by our sentence.” The pope added that three bishops named Pausianus, Cyriacus and Calliopus were to be “utterly removed from our communion,” and that a bishop named Maximus, who apparently had been illicitly ordained, had to be deposed. [PL 20: 776–7]

At the same time, as he had indicated to Rufus, the pope wrote to the bishops of Thessaly:

The institution of the universal Church at its birth took its beginning from the office of Blessed Peter, in whose person its government and summit consists. For from his fountain the stream of ecclesiastical discipline flowed forth into all the Churches, as the culture of religion progressively

advanced. The precepts of the Council of Nicea bear witness to nothing else: so that it did not dare to appoint anything over him, seeing that nothing could possibly be conferred above his office: moreover, it knew that everything had been granted to him by the word of the Lord. Certain, therefore, is it that this [Roman] Church is to the Churches spread throughout the world, as it were, the head of its own members, from which whoever cuts himself off is expelled from the Christian religion, inasmuch as he has ceased to be within the one structure.

I hear that certain bishops, despising the apostolic right, have attempted anew to undermine the precepts of Christ Himself, since they are striving to separate themselves from the Apostolic See's communion, or if I may speak more accurately, her authority, asking for help from those to whom ecclesiastical rules have not sanctioned any greater authority...

Receive, therefore, our admonition and rebuke: one of which we offer to the pontiffs [siding with us], the other to the dissidents. For you know that either one is possible to Blessed Peter: that is, to correct the meek with meekness, or to rebuke the haughty with the rod.

Show therefore due honor to the head, for we do not want the members to be fighting with each other, with their quarrels reaching all the way to us, while you hold in contempt our brother and fellow bishop Rufus, to whom our authority granted nothing new, following the precedent by which the care of the churches was enjoined on him. We want this to be observed holy and inviolate, as the decree of this disposition has been kept by the fathers, for it is unfitting for the brethren to be irked at the dignity of another. If anybody was punished excessively, without question there should have been an appeal to us, in whom, as you know, the

care of all remains, and a delegation sent, because for this purpose the Apostolic See holds the principality, so that it may receive the lawful complaints of all...

Let this novel presumption cease. Let nobody strive to undermine what has been done by the fathers, and observed for so long. Whoever accounts himself a bishop, let him obey our ordinance. Let nobody presume to ordain bishops anywhere in Illyricum without the knowledge of our fellow bishop Rufus... [PL 20: 777-79]

The pope sent another letter to Rufus and the bishops throughout Macedonia, Achaia, Thessaly, Old Epirus, New Epirus, Praevalitana and Dacia, which begins:

By the determination of the Lord, the care he received for the Universal Church remains [with] the blessed apostle Peter, which, as the Gospel attests, he knows to have been founded upon himself: nor can his office ever be free of cares, inasmuch as it is certain that the supreme direction of matters depends on his deliberation... [PL 20: 779]

Noting that this consideration moved him to consider the eastern regions, the pope objected again to the synod planned “to discuss the status of [Perrevious], whom the Apostolic See, after thorough examination of the matter, established as bishop for the Corinthians,” even though “all the people and clergy of the city had asked this of us.” [PL 20: 779-80]

Reminding the bishops that Rufus was the Apostolic See’s duly commissioned vicar in the east, the pope warned of the danger of pride, which might induce the bishops into rivalry even with him in whom “our Christ placed the pinnacle of the priesthood,” and added:

...whoever arises in contumely against him cannot be an inhabitant of the kingdom of heaven. *To thee*, he says, *I shall give the keys of the kingdom of heaven*, where nobody shall

enter without the favor of the key-bearer. *Thou art*, he says, *Peter, and upon this rock I shall build my Church*. [PL 20: 780-81]

The pope added these comments about the order of sees:

...if you would like to review what has been laid down by the canons, you shall find which see, after the Roman Church, is second, or which is third... and indeed this teaching of the canons has endured from of old, as it lasts even now, through the favor of our Christ. For nobody ever rashly laid hands against the apostolic summit, whose judgment cannot be reconsidered— nobody ever rebelled against it, except one who wanted to be judged by that very fact. The aforementioned great churches, Alexandria and Antioch, preserve these dignities through the canons, having the knowledge of ecclesiastical law. They preserve, I say, the statutes of the ancients... [PL 20: 782]

In matters of great moment, the pope continued, the greatest eastern churches always consulted the Roman Church, and asked for her assistance whenever necessary:

Athanasius and Peter of holy memory, bishops of the Church of Alexandria, asked for the assistance of this see. When the Church of Antioch underwent a long trial... first under Meletius and later under Flavian, the Apostolic See clearly was consulted, through whose authority... nobody doubts that Flavian received the favor of communion, which he always would have lacked, had not letters emanated from here. Emperor Theodosius... considering that the ordination of Nectarius lacked firmness because it was not recognized by us, after sending a delegation of court officials and bishops, duly requested that letters of communion be sent from this See of Rome, to confirm his priesthood. A short time ago, under my predecessor Innocent of blessed memory, the

bishops of the eastern churches, sorrowing in that they were separated from the communion of Blessed Peter, requested peace through legates, as Your Charity remembers. At that time, the Apostolic See forgave everything without difficulty, obeying that master who said [II Cor. 2, 10]: “If you have forgiven anybody anything, so have I...” [PL 20: 782–3]

Nobody, the pope continued, should call into question the election of Perigenes, “whose priesthood the apostle Peter has already confirmed at the suggestion of the Holy Spirit.” If an accusation had to be made against a bishop, it was to be referred to Rufus, “to whom we have entrusted everything in our stead, who will report everything to our knowledge.” Further, nobody was to ordain without the knowledge of Rufus. Violators of these precepts would have only themselves to blame, the pope concluded, “when they see themselves excluded from apostolic charity.” [PL 20: 783–4]

Pope Celestine [422–432]

Pope Celestine I [422–432] wrote in 428 to several bishops of Illyricum. Among the different concerns and various business constantly coming to us from all the Churches, he remarked, we owe you an even more intense solicitude, as you can see from our own decrees and the nature of the cases themselves. Celestine was concerned that Felix, a bishop of the province of Dyrrhacena, was being oppressed by a certain faction. This is no new care on the part of the Apostolic See, the pope continued, because the duty of watching over you has always been committed to the bishop of Thessalonica. The pope added:

We especially are bound to have care for all, to whom Christ imposed the necessity of dealing with all, in the holy apostle Peter, when He gave him the keys for opening and shutting... [PL 50: 427–8]

The letter reviewed some powers of the vicar at Thessalonica: without his counsel, no bishop was to be ordained. Bishops were not to gather against his will. Whatever needed to be reported to the pope was to

go through the bishop of Thessalonica. By this command, the pope concluded, let it be known that whoever believes that our authority, or [the vicar's] command is to be resisted, must be separated from the episcopal college. [PL 50: 428-9]

Sixtus III [432-440]

Pope Celestine's successor, Sixtus III [432-440], also had occasion to reaffirm the role of the papal vicar at Thessalonica. Apparently Perigenes, who had been confirmed as bishop of Corinth by Pope Boniface I, had not shown sufficient obedience to the vicar. Reminding Perigenes that "the Apostolic See's authority had been with you at the beginning of your ordination," Sixtus III wrote to him:

...Now therefore, dearest brother, having been admonished by our letters... preserve the same reverence for our holy brother and fellow-bishop, Anastasius, bishop of Thessalonica, which other pontiffs established throughout Illyricum do not refuse to reserve for his dignity; for we know that nothing new was given to him by us, but [we gave him] what our predecessors gave to his predecessors. For it is the business of your [Church] to show the greatest deference to that Church which bestowed such great honor on you... [PL 50: 610-11]

In July 435, Pope Sixtus wrote to the synod of Thessalonica, reaffirming the powers of the papal vicar:

We grant the same power to our brother and fellow-bishop Anastasius, as our predecessors gave to his predecessors. We follow the judgment of those who came before us, laying down what we know that they established... Let nobody go against the salutary constitutions; let nobody resist these commands... Let the metropolitans of each city have their honor... In their provinces let them have the right to ordain, but let none of them dare to ordain without the knowledge

or consent of the bishop we want to be consulted about all ordinations. Let the more important cases be referred to the bishop of Thessalonica. To him belongs the greater care of examining more carefully and approving those who are called to the episcopate... Regarding other matters, whatever they may be, we want them to be resolved by our present letters... [PL 50: 611-12]

Pope Sixtus repeated that Perigenes could not freely exercise authority as bishop of Corinth without obeying the Church of Thessalonica; the pope also indicated that he would resist any usurpations by Perigenes. [PL 50: 611-12]

When Maximianus, bishop of Constantinople, died in 434, he was succeeded by Proclus, bishop of Cyzicus, who had enjoyed support in earlier elections. Three years later Pope Sixtus wrote to Proclus, reaffirming the role of the papal vicar at Thessalonica. If any bishops presented themselves at Constantinople without letters of authorization from the bishop of Thessalonica, the pope wrote, they were acting in violation of ecclesiastical law and should be treated in that light. [Ep. 9. PL 50: 612-13]

Iddua, bishop of Smyrna, had been accused of an offense before Proclus at Constantinople, who pronounced Iddua innocent. Unhappy with this sentence, Iddua's accusers had brought their accusations to Rome. "We have decreed that [your] judgment be maintained," the pope wrote to Proclus. [PL 50: 613]

In December 437, Sixtus III wrote to all the bishops of Illyricum, admonishing them to obey the vicar at Thessalonica. "Let it not be onerous to you," the pope wrote, "to be admonished... about what has come to our knowledge." Comparing himself to the apostle Paul, who visited by letter all the churches, the pope urged the bishops to observe "what has been kept by us for the sake of peace in the churches," adding:

As we have received it from our predecessors, and as we also have laid down, all the Churches of Illyricum belong to the

care of the bishop of Thessalonica...so that whatever is done by any of the bishops be referred to him... Let there be a council as often as cases arise, as often as he decrees it by virtue of upcoming emergencies, so that the Apostolic See, informed by his report, may with reason confirm the acts... Let none of you depart from the precepts of the canons, or deviate from what the frequent authoritative utterance of the Apostolic See, which has been sent to you, shall have decreed... If any matter arise among the brethren, let it either be settled there, with our brother and fellow bishop Anastasius, who by our will is known to hold the place of the Apostolic See... acting as judge... or, if it cannot be settled over there, let the examination... come to us. There is no body which is not ruled by a head. Although you are holy members, as we know, it still behooves you to look upon and honor your head... Reserve for your brother and fellow bishop [Anastasius] the reverence you owe, and preserve peace and concord among yourselves. [PL 50: 617-18]

The Vicariate under Pope Leo the Great

Pope Leo I [440-461] continued to make use of vicars at Thessalonica. On January 12, 444, Leo wrote to the bishops of Illyricum:

...because our care extends throughout all the churches, [and] this is required of us by the Lord, who entrusted to the most blessed apostle Peter the primacy of the apostolic dignity as a reward for his faith, establishing the Universal Church in the solidity of that very foundation, we associate the solicitude necessary for us with those who are joined to us in the charity of our college... We have, therefore, entrusted our place to our brother and fellow-bishop Anastasius, following the example of those whose memory we venerate, [and] have enjoined on him to watch, lest anything illicit be presumed by anybody. We admonish Your Charity to obey him in matters related to ecclesiastical discipline. For

the obedience is shown not so much to him as to us, who have entrusted this office to him throughout those provinces, in accordance with our solicitude. [PL 54: 615]

The pope continued with familiar instructions about ordinations: it was illicit to ordain men who were married twice, or who had married a widow. Disputes between bishops were to be referred to the vicar, who in turn had to send a report to the pope. No disrespect was to be shown to the vicar, or the pope whom the vicar represented. Metropolitans had much the same relationship to the vicar as bishops to the metropolitans. In each province bishops were to be ordained by the metropolitan, who was to consult with the vicar. Anastasius himself was to ordain the metropolitans. *Causae maiores*, or more important cases, were to be decided personally by the pope by means of reports from the vicar. [PL 54: 615-16]

Pope Leo wrote to Anastasius as well, urging him to be watchful about observance of the canons, especially regarding ordinations. He gave Anastasius the same instructions about ordinations that he had just given the metropolitans. Nobody was to be ordained a bishop without the knowledge of Anastasius, who in turn was to consecrate the metropolitans, after mature judgment. [PL 54: 617-19]

The pope repeated that greater cases were reserved for his own decision, adding that he had informed the metropolitans of these rules, “so that they may realize that they must obey the apostolic decisions.” He concluded by directing that priests and deacons were to be ordained on Sundays, as the canons and tradition of the Fathers required for episcopal consecrations as well. [PL 54: 619-20]

On January 6, 446, Leo wrote again to the metropolitans of Illyricum, thanking them for their reception of his letters and repeating “that the churches throughout Illyricum pertain to the care of our brother and fellow bishop Anastasius... so that if there are any major cases among the bishops which cannot be settled in their provinces, they are to be referred to his knowledge...” [PL 54: 663-64]

Leo also urged the bishops to attend councils called by Anastasius—at least two or three bishops from each province would suffice, “so that what might be onerous to the many might be a light burden for the few.” [PL 54: 665]

From the reports of Anastasius, Leo had learned that the metropolitan of Achaia had often performed “illicit ordinations, forbidden by the constitutions of the Fathers and our authority,” and imposed a bishop on the Thespians against their will. Leo pointed out that it was illicit for a metropolitan to ordain a bishop in this arbitrary manner, without the consent of the clergy and people. [PL 54: 665]

St. Leo also reminded metropolitans that no bishop may punish a member of another bishop’s clergy, “for the authority of the canons has defined this, and the very nature of the unity which must be preserved teaches it.” [PL 54: 666]

The Papal Vicar Rebuked

In at least one instance, Anastasius carried out his functions with a heavy hand. The vicar had compelled Atticus, metropolitan of Old Epirus, to come *under military escort* to Thessalonica, to sign a profession of obedience before Anastasius. Outraged at this treatment, Atticus had come to Rome along with some of his fellow bishops, and complained personally to Pope Leo. [PL 54: 670]

Pope Leo fired off a letter of reprimand to Anastasius, reminding him of the directions “by which we frequently instructed you about the moderation to be observed in all actions.” If a certain mildness is necessary even when rebuking lay people [I Tim. 5, 1], he asked Anastasius, how much more is it necessary when bishops themselves need to be corrected? Urging Anastasius to reread all instructions that the popes ever sent to Thessalonica, Leo asked where any pope ever commanded the sort of thing that Anastasius had just presumed to do. [PL 54: 669–70]

The authority delegated to Anastasius, the pope added, was not an

unlimited one:

...I have delegated the place of my authority so that, in imitation of my meekness, you might assist *in the care we owe to all the churches principally and by divine institution*, and in a sense extend the presence of our visitation to provinces far distant from us... For we have entrusted our place to Your Charity in such a way that *you are called to a share in our solicitude, not the fulness of authority*. [PL 54: 668–671]

In case of disagreements between the papal vicar and the other bishops, Rome must be consulted, Leo wrote, and concluded:

...among the most blessed apostles, in the likeness of their office there was a certain difference in authority; and although all were equal in their election, yet was it granted to one to be pre-eminent over the rest. From this pattern a distinction also arose among bishops, and by a great ordinance provision was made to prevent them all from claiming all authority for themselves; rather in each province there would be [bishops] whose sentence was to be considered first among the brethren; and again, bishops in the greater cities were to undertake a wider solicitude, *through whom the care of the Universal Church would flow unto the one See of Peter, and nothing ever dissent from its head...* [PL 54: 676]

After this point, the lack of historical documents makes it difficult to trace the history of the vicariate. The record has much more to say about the dogmatic disputes in which the Apostolic See would be compelled to intervene.

Chapter VII

The Man With The Golden Mouth

When Nectarius of Constantinople died in 397, considerable competition ensued for the vacant see. Various priests began lobbying for it, one of whom asked the people, literally on bended knee, to choose himself! Eventually a priest of Antioch named John, a monk who had been ordained by Flavian of Antioch, was chosen as the new bishop. [Palladius, *De Vita Chrysostomi*, 5. PG 47: 19]

The historian Sozomen writes that one of John's first acts as bishop was to ask Theophilus, bishop of Alexandria, to help reconcile the bishop of Rome with Flavian of Antioch, John's former bishop. A delegation went to Rome, informing the west of John's promotion to the see of Constantinople. The delegation included Bishop Acacius of Berea. On his way back to Syria, Acacius brought letters of communion from both Alexandria and the west for Flavian. [Sozomen, HE VIII, 3]

As a bishop, John inveighed against all sorts of abuses in the Christian life. His eloquence was so great that in later centuries, he was called *Chrysostom*, or "Golden Mouth." Theophilus of Alexandria, however, was sharply opposed to John. The Alexandrian patriarch, who was all-powerful in Egypt, descended on Constantinople in 403. Theophilus and his entourage, which included twenty-nine Egyptian bishops, held a council known as the *Synod of the Oak*, and condemned John on various trumped-up charges, the most serious of which was that John had welcomed Origenist heretics from Alexandria. The judgment of the synod was accepted by the eastern emperor, Arcadius. Within days, John was led into exile. [Palladius, 8. PG 47: 25-30. Socrates, HE VI, 2-15]

The outrageous treatment of John had caused immediate protests:

Keys Over the Christian World

the faithful of Constantinople, stunned by the condemnation of their bishop, called for a larger council. John was momentarily brought back to the vicinity of Constantinople where he continued to maintain his innocence, but intrigues against him continued. In June 404 John was led into exile a second time, first to Nicea and then to Cucusus in Armenia. Arsakios, elderly brother of the late Nectarius, became the new bishop, and when he died after about fourteen months, the priest Atticus succeeded him. [Palladius, 11. PG 47: 36–7. Socrates, HE VI, 16–20. Sozomen, Bk VIII]

Meanwhile, a lector from the Alexandrian Church brought letters to Rome, in which Theophilus announced to Pope Innocent that John had been deposed. Alerted by a deacon from Constantinople, Innocent reserved judgment. A few days later, another letter reached Rome, presenting the case in a very different light. It was from John himself. [Palladius, 1. PG 47: 7–8]

The letter from Chrysostom showed what a travesty had occurred in the royal city. John described how Theophilus had been commanded by the emperor to come *alone*, but instead had brought no small multitude of Egyptian bishops with him, “as if preparing for war.” When he entered Constantinople, Theophilus had not taken part in the prayers or the Liturgy in the Cathedral, but had stayed aloof, outside the city, refusing to accept the hospitality John had offered. Although John had refused to act as judge of Theophilus, the Alexandrian patriarch had shown no such scruples: not only was Theophilus determined to judge John, he had even demanded that the clergy of Constantinople act as John’s accusers. Although John was prepared to defend his innocence before “a hundred, or even a thousand bishops,” he refused to accept Theophilus as his judge, because it was illegal for bishops to judge bishops of another province. Finally, John described a violent scene on Holy Saturday, in which soldiers had literally invaded his church. Even Jews, heretics and non-Christians had been shocked at this bloody scene, added John, who continued with this plea:

Now that you are aware of everything, my most venerable and religious lords, show the courage and zeal that befit you, so as to preserve the Churches from the

illegalities raging against them. For if this custom prevails, and anybody is allowed to come into foreign provinces to expel whatever bishop he wants, and do whatever he wants by his own authority, everything is ruined, and an implacable war is unleashed over the entire world, with all the bishops expelling each other and being expelled. Lest therefore such a confusion invade the whole earth which is under heaven, I ask you to denounce by letter what has been done so unjustly by one side, in our absence... [so that such actions] have no force, as is the case by their very nature, and that those who have carried out these actions be subjected to the penalties of ecclesiastical law... [Palladius, 2. PG 47: 8-12]

Finally, John asked for letters to show that he was still in communion with the west, and had not been abandoned by it, adding that the same letter was being sent to the bishops of Aquileia and Milan. [Palladius, 2]

Pope Innocent Refuses to Condemn Chrysostom

Pope Innocent wanted a fair council, with impartial judges, that included both eastern and western bishops. He wrote back to Theophilus that he remained in communion with *both* John and Theophilus, but Rome was not going to accept John's condemnation without a genuine trial. [Palladius, 3. PG 47: 12]

A few days later, a priest of Alexandria brought to Rome the acts of the Synod of the Oak. Innocent could see that John had been condemned by 36 bishops, *twenty-nine of whom were Egyptian*, and that John had been condemned without having been heard, not to mention the fact that Theophilus had no jurisdiction in Constantinople. Innocent wanted nothing to do with this kangaroo court, and informed the bishop of Alexandria that any case against John had to be presented before a new council, where John would be judged according to the standard of the canons of Nicea, "for the Roman Church recognizes no other rule." [Palladius, 3. PG 47: 12-13]

The situation was looking very grim for John. Not only was he in exile, but severe penalties were being decreed for anybody who remained in communion with him. Nevertheless, about twenty-five eastern bishops known as “the synod of John” had remained faithful to Chrysostom. The synod informed Innocent how John had been dragged from his church by force and led into exile. Innocent assured the synod that he was still in communion, not only with John, but with all the bishops who remained faithful to John. [PG 47: 13]

Others friends of John Chrysostom continued to keep Innocent informed of events in the east. Cyriacus, bishop of Synnada, announced that an imperial edict threatened with deposition any bishop who refused the communion of Theophilus or of Atticus, who had replaced John at Constantinople. Anysius, bishop of Thessalonica, wrote, announcing that he would accept the judgment of the Roman Church. Palladius, bishop of Helenopolis, informed Innocent by letter that another edict threatened to confiscate homes that harbored clergy faithful to John. Finally, a priest of Constantinople and the deacon Cassian brought letters from the clergy in Constantinople loyal to John. [PG 47: 13–14]

Meanwhile Demetrius, bishop of Pisinuntos, was going all over the east, showing the pope’s letters and announcing that the Romans were still in communion with John. Demetrius also had letters from the clergy of Antioch, in which they followed the directions of the Romans. [PG 47: 14]

In Defense of John Chrysostom

In 405, Pope Innocent wrote to the clergy and people of Constantinople, consoling them and deploring not only the unjust condemnation of John, but also the intrusion of another bishop in John’s place. Innocent declared his wish that an ecumenical council restore peace in the east, reiterating his conviction that the Catholic Church should recognize and follow only the canons of Nicea. Because the Roman manuscripts included the canons of both Nicea and Sardica under one heading, as the “Canons of Nicea,” Innocent meant that the Sardican canons should be accepted as well. [PL 20: 501–7]

Why did the pope insist on the canons of Nicea as the proper standard for judging John? John's accusers had cited canon 4 of the Council of Antioch in 341, which stipulated that a bishop deposed by a council, who continued to function in spite of the sentence, could have no hope for restoration. Arians had written this canon against Athanasius, and the Council of Sardica, much to their chagrin, had ignored it and reinstated him.

Now Theophilus was citing the same canon against John Chrysostom. Palladius, a disciple of Chrysostom who became bishop of Helenopolis, wrote that this canon of Antioch had been "abrogated at Sardica by the Romans, the Italians, the Illyrians, the Macedonians and those from Hellas," when "Liberius [sic] or Julius... received Athanasius into communion." [PG 47: 31]

As for the projected ecumenical council, Honorius [395-423], the western emperor, moved by the letters of Pope Innocent, interceded with Arcadius, the eastern emperor, in favor of the idea. [Palladius, 3. PG 47: 14]

The pope pressed ahead and held a council of Italian bishops, which asked Honorius once again to intervene with the eastern emperor. The western ruler asked Pope Innocent to choose a delegation of bishops and other clergy, who were to bear letters from Honorius to Arcadius. Honorius asked his eastern counterpart to cooperate in convoking an ecumenical council at Thessalonica. The delegation was composed of Bishop Aemilius of Benevento, two Roman priests, and some eastern bishops faithful to John Chrysostom. Bearing letters from the western emperor, the embassy made its way eastward, but as soon as the delegates reached the territory of Arcadius, they were thrown into prison: while the western clergy in the embassy were sent home, the eastern clergy were led into exile. [Palladius, 3-4, 20. PG 47: 14-15, 71]

In late 406 or 407, the pope received another letter from John Chrysostom. John thanked Innocent for his zeal and vigilance, explained that the solitude of his place of exile prevented him from writing more often, and urged him to continue working for the redress of injustices in the east. The pope replied consoling John, and urging him to continue suffering

in patience. [Coustant, 809-16; PL 20: 515 sq.]

No other letters were preserved between Pope Innocent and John Chrysostom. John's captors had planned to send him to Pityontes, on the coast of the Black Sea, but he never reached that destination. He died at Comana, on September 14, 407. [Palladius, 11. PG 47: 38]

Pope Innocent, who had been unable to save John, broke communion with the party of Theophilus, which had been responsible for persecuting John, until John's name was restored to the diptychs—the liturgical commemorations of the living and the dead. When the Church named a person in the diptychs, she professed her communion with that individual. The restoration of John's name to the diptychs was tantamount to his posthumous rehabilitation. To bring about that rehabilitation, the pope was prepared, if necessary, to break with the patriarchal sees of the east.

In the case of Alexandria, Theophilus, who had the chief responsibility for persecuting John, died in 412. Theophilus was followed by his nephew Cyril. At some point—it is not exactly clear when—John's name was restored to the diptychs, because the Alexandrian Church venerates Chrysostom as a saint.

As for Antioch, Bishop Flavian, who had ordained John a priest, was unwilling to betray him. Flavian, however, died in 404, and was followed by Porphyrius, who accepted the communion of Atticus, who had illegally succeeded John at Constantinople. Palladius, the sympathetic biographer of John Chrysostom, notes that Porphyrius wrote to Rome and “was not deemed worthy of a response.” [*De Vita Chrysostomi*, 16. PG 47: 53]

Reconciliation with Antioch

Rome was not reconciled with Antioch for another nine years, when Porphyrius died and was followed by a new bishop, Alexander. Alexander restored John's name to the diptychs, and to demonstrate his desire for reconciliation, he sent a delegation to Rome which included the priest

Cassian. As a further gesture of peace, Alexander accepted the clergy who had been ordained by Paulinus and Evagrius during the long schism at Antioch. Delighted with these gestures, Pope Innocent wrote to Alexander:

I inquired carefully whether all the conditions were satisfied in the case of the blessed bishop John, who was truly worthy of God. And since in each instance the legates affirmed that the conditions had been met, giving thanks to the Lord I received the communion of your Church... [PL 20: 541-2]

The pope delegated Alexander as intermediary between Rome and Acacius of Berea, who had participated in the persecution of John. When Acacius demonstrated his sincerity to Alexander, Rome in turn would grant letters of communion, through Alexander. [PL 20: 542-4]

About 415, Innocent wrote to Alexander again, responding to various inquiries. Antioch's high rank, the pope explained, was not due to her civil status, but to her position as "*the first see of the first apostle, where the Christian religion also received its name.*" In fact, Innocent added, Antioch would not yield in dignity to the See of Rome, were it not for the fact that Antioch had received Peter *temporarily*, while Rome had possessed Peter in a permanent way. In another letter, the pope called the Church of Antioch a "twin" of the Roman Church and expressed joy at the reconciliation, "lest the members, which had requested healing, be considered foreign to the unity of the body." [PL 20: 546 sq.]

Alexander had asked if, in case the civil authorities divided the provinces, the Church should follow suit and institute an *ecclesiastical metropolis* for each new province. Innocent's answer was *no*: the Church should not institute ecclesiastical honors and divisions in accordance with changing worldly necessities. Innocent also reaffirmed Alexander's rights: just as Alexander ordained metropolitans by his singular authority, so also the rest of the bishops should not be ordained without Alexander's knowledge and permission. [PL 20: 548]

Meanwhile Atticus, bishop of Constantinople, had requested Rome's communion several times. The pope's letters note that Atticus could not be

readmitted to communion unless he fulfilled the conditions laid down at Rome, and in the first place restore John Chrysostom's name to the diptychs. Eventually Atticus did restore John's name, and peace was restored between Rome and the east. [PL 20: 544-6. Theodoret, HEV, 34]

Pope Innocent and Later Greek Sources

Certain late biographies of St. Chrysostom magnified Pope Innocent's role in the saint's defense, adding details uncorroborated by contemporary accounts. The editors of J.P. Migne's *Patrology* decided not to include them all, because in their judgment, these late biographies contained details which did not pass muster historically. [PG 47: XXIII sq.]

When John Chrysostom was condemned at the Synod of the Oak, he appealed to a larger council, an ecumenical council. A late Greek *Life* reports this fact, asserting another detail. Menaced with condemnation by Theophilus, Chrysostom is reported to have replied: "*You have no right to gather a synod against me without the Pope of Rome.*" The biographer condemns the behavior of Theophilus because he should have acted in accord with the Pope of Rome, and did not do so. [Ed. H. Savile, *Sancti Ioannis Chrysostomi Opera Graece*, Eton 1610-12, 8: 349-51]

Theodore of Trimitheon, a Greek bishop from Cyprus [c. 680], also wrote a *Life* of Chrysostom, in which the saint's persecutor, Theophilus, is deposed "in the name and authority of Peter the *coryphaeus*," by Pope Innocent, who convokes a council of all Italy "together with the great bishop of the supreme chair of Peter." The pope also excommunicates the eastern rulers, Arcadius and Eudoxia, warning that any cleric who infringes "the divinely decreed sentence of Peter the apostle" is subject to comparable punishments. Theophilus is not only deposed but punished with "excommunication, anathema and complete deprivation of the Christian name." In this account, the eastern rulers eventually excuse themselves in a letter to Innocent, requesting that he restore them to communion. [PG 47: LX-LXXV]

H. Savile published another *Life* of Chrysostom by George, bishop of Alexandria [c. 620], who may have resided in Constantinople. George

not only repeats Theodore's assertions about the excommunication of the eastern rulers, but adds that Pope Innocent entrusted the Church of Constantinople to Proclus, bishop of Cyzicus, until the case of Atticus was settled. [*Sancti Ioannis Chrysostomi Opera Graece*, 8: 251]

Migne's editors did not think highly of George as a historian. In fact, they excluded his biography of St. Chrysostom from the *Patrology* series because the historical value of his writing, in their opinion, was so poor. [PG 47: XXIII sq.]

The Coptic and Ethiopian Synaxaria also mention the excommunication of the imperial family, although they seem to confuse Pope Innocent with Pope Boniface I [418-422]. The Ethiopian commemoration of St. Chrysostom on 12 Genbot and the Coptic recension for 12 Bachons [May 7] include this notice:

When the emperor of Rome, Honorius, and Pope Boniface [sic] learned of the saint's exile, they sent letters in which they rebuked Arcadius, warned him about this evil action and threatened him... When the news [of Chrysostom's second exile] reached Honorius and the pope, they were pained; the latter wrote a letter barring the empress from communion until she returned the saint. When they sent to find him so as to restore him to his see, he was found dead... the pope was informed. He put the empress under interdict for eight months; then he lifted the interdict after numerous entreaties... [PO 16: 376-7. Cf. Ethiopian recension, PO 47: 253]

Today, John Chrysostom is venerated as a saint in east and west. During his lifetime Rome was not able to save him, but Pope Innocent's vigorous intervention insured that Christian history would treat John more justly than had the Synod of the Oak.

Chapter VIII

The Keys Over Heresy and Schism

When Mensurius, primate of Carthage, died in 311, the archdeacon Cecilianus was elected his successor by the vote of the entire people and ordained by Felix, bishop of Aptunga. Two clerics named Botrus and Coelestius, who had sought the succession, entered into league with a rich matron named Lucilla, who had had a falling out with Cecilianus. This clique succeeded in getting the bishops of a neighboring province to come and ordain Maiorinus— a former servant of Lucilla who had also been a lector under Cecilianus— as a rival bishop of Carthage. To justify the ordination, opponents of Cecilianus claimed that Felix of Aptunga, the bishop who ordained him, was a *traditor* or traitor— one who in time of persecution had delivered the Sacred Scriptures to the pagans. [St. Optatus, *De Schism. Donat.* I, 19. PL 11: 919]

A bishop named Donatus of Casas Nigras began leading these malcontents, and the party of Majorinus quickly became known as the “Donatists,” or party of Donatus. The schism spread throughout Africa, raising altar against altar and bishop against bishop, dividing the faithful into two camps— one for Cecilianus, the other for Majorinus. When Constantine recognized Cecilianus as the rightful bishop of Carthage, the Donatists fought back, forwarding their accusations against him, with a request that the emperor choose bishops from Gaul to act as judges in the dispute. [PL 11: 930]

Constantine accepted this request, choosing as judges Maternus, bishop of Cologne, Reticus, bishop of Autun, and Marinus, bishop of Arles. A council met at Rome in October 313. The judges included Pope Miltiades, the three bishops sent by Constantine, and fifteen Italian bishops. According to St. Optatus, bishop of Milevis [c. 370], Donatus was found

guilty of rebaptism and other violations, while “Cecilianus was pronounced innocent by the sentence of all of the above, including the sentence of Miltiades, by which the judgment was closed with these words: ‘...as it is clear that Cecilianus was not... convicted of anything by those who came with Donatus, I deem it right that [Cecilianus] be restored to his church’s communion with full rank.’” [Bk I, 24. PL 11: 932]

At the beginning of the schism, an offer was made to the Donatists: bishops who had supported Majorinus could keep their sees, provided that they returned to unity. Where there were two rival bishops, the one consecrated first could stay; the other bishop was to be transferred to another see. Miltiades informed the emperor of these decisions, while Donatists clamored for yet *another* council, and another chance to present their case. Constantine referred them to an upcoming council to be held at Arles in the summer of 314. [Mansi 2: 463 sq. PL 43: 780, 788]

The Council of Arles

At the Council of Arles, Cecilianus was vindicated again, and the council wrote to Miltiades’ successor, Silvester:

Adhering to our mother, the Catholic Church, in the common bond of charity and unity, having been led to the city of Arles by the will of our most pious emperor, from here we greet you, most glorious pope... [Mansi 2: 469]

The council informed Silvester that it had met with “men of unbridled mind, who are burdensome and pernicious to our law and tradition”; these were “either condemned or driven away.” Noting Silvester’s absence, the council continued, “you were unable to depart from those regions in which the Apostles daily sit, and their blood bears witness incessantly to God’s glory,” and added, regarding its decisions, “it has seemed good to us that they should be communicated to all especially by you, who hold the greater dioceses...” [Mansi 2: 469]

The council also enacted a canon about baptism:

Canon 8. Regarding the Africans, who use their own law to rebaptize, it has been enacted that if anybody comes to the church from heresy, let them ask him the Creed: and if they see that he has been baptized in the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, let the hand be imposed upon him only, that he may receive the Holy Spirit. But if the person questioned does not answer with this Trinity, let him be baptized. [Mansi 2: 472]

Canon 13 made it clear that even if anybody had been ordained by a “traitor,” the one ordained was not to be disturbed or deposed. This canon was aimed at the incessant disturbances and accusations of the Donatists. [Mansi 2: 472-3]

The Fathers Against the Donatists

In his refutation of the Donatists, St. Optatus discussed the origin of the schism, who the real traitors were, the unity and universality of the Church, and the question of which Church had the *dotes*, the endowments or charisms of the true Church— what we call today the “marks of the Church.” The first of the *dotes* or endowments of the true Church analyzed by Optatus is “the chair,” or episcopal chair. In other words, who has apostolic succession? Optatus challenged the Donatists:

...You cannot deny, then, that you know that in the city of Rome the episcopal Chair was first conferred upon Peter, in which Peter, head of all the apostles, first sat, wherefore he was also called Cephas: in which one Chair unity was to be preserved by all, lest all the other apostles defend their own [chairs] unto themselves, so that anybody who would set up another chair against that unique one should now be a schismatic and a sinner.

Therefore in the unique Chair, which is the first of the endowments, Peter first sat: to whom succeeded Linus, to Linus succeeded Clement, to Clement Anacletus, to

Keys Over the Christian World

Anacletus Evaristus, to Evaristus Sixtus, to Sixtus Telesphorus, to Telesphorus Hyginus, to Hyginus Anicetus, to Anicetus Pius, to Pius Soter, to Soter Victor, to Victor Zephyrinus, to Zephyrinus Callistus, to Callistus Urban, to Urban Pontian, to Pontian Anterus, to Anterus Fabian, to Fabian Cornelius, to Cornelius Lucius, to Lucius Stephen, to Stephen Sixtus, to Sixtus Dionysius, to Dionysius Felix, to Felix Marcellinus, to Marcellinus Eusebius, to Eusebius Miltiades, to Miltiades Silvester, to Silvester Mark, to Mark Julius, to Julius Liberius, to Liberius Damasus, to Damasus Siricius, who is our colleague today, with whom the entire world, along with us, is in harmony in the fellowship of one communion, through the exchange of letters of communion. Give us the origin of *your* chair, you who wish to claim holy Church for yourselves... [*Contra Parmenianum*, II, 2-3. PL 11: 947-50]

This demonstration rests on a bit of parallelism: because Peter, head of the apostles, first sat in the *unique chair*, the rest of the apostles had to respect the unity of that chair; whoever would set up another chair is *a schismatic and a sinner*. Linus succeeded to Peter, and so on, up to Damasus and Siricius, “with whom the entire world... is in the fellowship of one communion.”

In other words, Catholic bishops, like the apostles, were respecting the unity of the one chair. Donatists, on the other hand, had “set up another chair in opposition to that unique one.” Whoever made himself an accomplice of the Donatists, then, would be “a schismatic and a sinner.” The “chair” claimed by the Donatists was not an apostolic chair but a *chair of pestilence*, Optatus continued:

...For pestilence sends to hell those whom it has killed through disease, [and] hell itself is known to have its own gates, against which gates we read that Peter, that is, our Chief, received the keys of salvation, to whom it was said by Christ: “to thee shall I give the keys of the kingdom of

heaven, and the gates of hell shall not overcome them.” [sic]
*Whence is it, then, that you strive to usurp for yourselves the keys
of the kingdom of heaven, you who sacrilegiously wage war against
the chair of Peter by your acts of presumption and audacity?* [Bk
II, 4-5. PL 11: 955-6]

Optatus’ words resemble those of an anonymous commentator, Ambrosiaster, whose actual identity is unknown, although many have identified him with a Roman Christian of the time of Pope Damasus [366-384], because Ambrosiaster wrote, “Whereas the whole world is God’s, yet is the Church called his house, whose ruler today is Damasus.” [PL 17: 471]

Some believe that Ambrosiaster was the author of *Questions on the New Testament*, in the appendix to St. Augustine’s works. Question 110 addresses the nature of schism in general, without making any reference specifically to the Donatists. According to Ambrosiaster, schismatics “disturb the order begun by the apostle Peter, and preserved to this very time by means of the succession of bishops, claiming for themselves an order without an origin, that is, *professing a body without a head*, wherefore it is also fitting to call their see a chair of pestilence...” [PL 35: 2331]

As if grasping the force of such arguments, the Donatists had endeavored to establish their own bishop of Rome, a certain Macrobius. However, Macrobius had no credible claim to sit in the chair of Peter, Optatus continued:

But you say that you have some part in the city of Rome. This is a branch of your error shooting up out of a lie, not from the root of truth. If Macrobius were asked where he sits, can he say ‘in the chair of Peter’? I am not even sure that he knows it by sight... [Bk II, 4. PL 11: 950-51]

The chair of Peter, concluded Optatus, “is ours... we have proved it through Peter.” [PL 11: 958, 962]

Later on, St. Augustine, bishop of Hippo, pursued a similar line of

argument against the Donatists, writing:

If the order of bishops succeeding to each other is to be reckoned, how much more securely and really beneficially do we reckon from Peter himself, to whom, bearing the figure of the Church, the Lord says, “Upon this rock I will build my Church.” [PL 33: 196. Ep. 53]

Augustine also composed the *Psalm Against the Party of Donatus*, an alphabetical hymn intended to counter Donatist propaganda, which expresses essentially the same argument:

You know what the Catholic Church is, and what is *cut off from the vine*; if there are any cautious among you, let them come; let them find life *in the root*. Come, brethren, if you wish to be engrafted in the vine: grief it is when we see you thus cut off. *Number the bishops from the very see of Peter, and in that order of the Fathers see who succeeded to whom. That is the rock against which the proud gates of hell do not prevail.* [PL 43: 30]

Augustine Refutes the Donatists

In one of his letters, Augustine discussed the origin of the Donatist schism. Speaking of the bishop of Carthage, who had been challenged by the Donatists, Augustine wrote:

[Carthage] had a bishop of no mediocre authority, who could afford to take no heed of a conspiring multitude of enemies, since he saw that he was connected, by letters of communion, both to the Roman Church, in which the principality of the apostolic chair was ever in force, and to the other lands whence the Gospel came into Africa itself... [Ep. 43. PL 33: 163]

In another work, *Contra Epistolam Manichaei*, Augustine pointed out

that many considerations held him within the Catholic Church, adding:

The consent of peoples and nations holds me, her authority holds me, inaugurated by miracles, nourished in hope, augmented by charity and confirmed by antiquity. *The succession of bishops holds me from the very see of the apostle Peter*, to whom the Lord, after his resurrection, entrusted his sheep to be fed, *down to the present episcopate...* [PL 42: 175]

A century before Augustine wrote, Miltiades, bishop of Rome, had been inclined to allow Donatist bishops who embraced unity to retain the episcopal dignity. Praising the wisdom and charity of this judgment, Augustine called Miltiades the “best of men, son of Christian peace and father of the Christian people.” [Ep. 43. PL 33: 167]

Augustine defended the memory of various Roman bishops accused of handing over the Scriptures to the pagans, and burning incense to pagan gods: Marcellinus [296–304], Marcellus [308–309], Miltiades [311–314] and Silvester [314–325]. Augustine addressed the accusations in the treatise *De Unico Baptismo*. Noting that there was no evidence in support of the allegations, Augustine dismissed them without further discussion. [PL 43: 610]

The Crisis of Pelagianism

About 400 a British monk, Pelagius, settled in Rome. Pelagius had two theories that departed radically from scriptural teaching. In the first place, he believed that original sin did not pass on to the rest of the human race through generation. He also believed that grace was not strictly necessary for man to obey God’s law.

About 410, Pelagius and his disciple Coelestius traveled to Africa, and began to make their mark about the time of the Catholic-Donatist conference at Carthage, in 411. While Pelagius went on to Palestine, Coelestius remained for the moment in Africa.

Keys Over the Christian World

Paulinus, a deacon of Milan, quickly realized that the doctrines of Coelestius were heretical. Paulinus alerted Aurelius, primate of Carthage, who called a council. Coelestius was condemned and excommunicated, but appealed to the bishop of Rome. Rather than pursue the appeal, however, Coelestius went on to Ephesus and was ordained a priest. [Marius Mercator, *Commonitorium*, 1. PL 48: 67-73]

Pelagius was under suspicion as well. By 415, a meeting under John, bishop of Jerusalem, examined his case. The main accuser was Paulus Orosius, a disciple of Augustine and Jerome. Obligated to communicate through interpreters, Orosius had trouble making an effective case, and asked that because Pelagius was a Latin, the case should be tried by Latin judges. John of Jerusalem agreed, and moved that “brethren and letters be sent to the blessed Innocent, Pope of Rome, [and that] all would follow what he decided.” [*Lib. Apol.*, 6. PL 31: 1178]

Another council examined the case in late 415, at Diospolis in Palestine, where Pelagius was acquitted of the charge of heresy. Augustine, bishop of Hippo, who described the council, complained that Pelagius had escaped condemnation by deceiving the judges with equivocal answers. [*De Gestis Pelagii*. PL 44: 319 sq.]

In 416, a council at Carthage took up the question of Pelagianism again. Noting that the new heresy of Pelagius and Coelestius “ought to be anathematized by us all,” the bishops wrote to Pope Innocent:

...We therefore decided, lord brother, that this action should be intimated to your holy charity, so that the authority of the Apostolic See should also be added to the statutes of our lowliness, to defend the salvation of the many and correct the perversity of certain individuals. [Mansi 4: 311-12]

The council offered abundant citations from Scripture, averring that Innocent preached the same doctrine “with greater grace from the Apostolic See.”

The Council of Milevis

About the same time, another African council of the province Numidia, meeting at Milevis, condemned Pelagius and Coelestius and also wrote to Pope Innocent. Noting that “the Lord, by a special gift of his grace, has placed you in the Apostolic See,” the council remarked that it would be guilty of negligence if it failed to inform Pope Innocent of this matter. Although the Pelagians already had been condemned at Carthage, the bishops wrote:

We believe, however, with the assistance of the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ... that those who hold such perverse and pernicious doctrines will yield more easily to the authority of Your Holiness, derived from the clear light of the Scriptures... [Mansi 4: 335–6]

Five African bishops— Augustine of Hippo, Primate Aurelius of Carthage, Alypius, Evodius, and Possidius— wrote to Pope Innocent. Pointing out that “the family of Christ... awaits the Lord’s help also by the charity of Your Reverence,” the bishops asked Innocent to summon Pelagius to Rome, and pin him down about what he— Pelagius— meant by “grace.” The bishops wrote,

If his supporters find out that the book, which they think or know to be [by Pelagius] has been condemned and anathematized by the authority of Catholic bishops, and especially that of Your Holiness, which, we have no doubt, will have greater weight with him, we do not think that they will dare to disturb faithful and simple Christian hearts any more... For we do not pour back our little stream so as to increase your broad fountain, but amidst the temptations of the present time, which are not negligible... we wish to be tested by you as to whether our admittedly small stream flows from the same source as your abundant river, and, to take comfort in your responses, in the common participation of one grace. [Mansi 4: 337–44]

Pope Innocent Replies to the Africans

Pope Innocent answered the letters from Africa with letters dated January 17, 417. To the Council of Carthage, Innocent wrote:

In examining the things of God, which ought to be handled with the utmost care by bishops, especially by a true and just and Catholic council, observing the examples of ancient tradition and mindful of ecclesiastical discipline, you have truly strengthened the force of your religion no less now, in your consultation, than before, when you pronounced sentence. For you have approved of referring this matter to our judgment, knowing what is due to the Apostolic See, *since all of us who are set in this place desire to follow the apostle, from whom the episcopate itself and the whole authority of this name is derived.* Following him [Peter], we have known both how to condemn evils and to approve the good.

So also, observing the institutions of the Fathers in your sacerdotal office, you were loath to disrespect what they decreed by a sentence not human but divine, *that whatever be done, even in distant provinces, not be concluded until it be brought to the knowledge of this see,* so that the whole just pronouncement might be strengthened by its authority, and that from it all other churches, (like waters flowing from their native wellspring, flowing through the different regions of the world as pure streams of one incorrupt head), should receive what they ought to command, whom they should wash, and whom that wave, worthy of pure bodies, ought to avoid as defiled with unwashable filth... [PL 20: 582-3]

The pope agreed that the enemies of grace, if unrepentant, must be cast out of the Church. He wrote to the Council of Milevis:

Among the different cares of the Roman Church, and occupations of the Apostolic See, by which we handle

with [no] small discussion the consultations of various people, our brother and fellow bishop Julius unexpectedly brought me letters from Your Charity, which you sent from the Council of Milevis with intense care for the faith, submitting also documents of the Council of Carthage containing similar complaints... a highly prudent consultation, full of Catholic faith.

It is, therefore, diligent of you and appropriate to consult the secrets of the apostolic office— I mean, that office on which rests, besides outside matters, the care of all the churches— as to what opinion must be held in this burning question, *thus following the formula of the ancient rule, which as you know has ever been observed along with me by the whole world*. But this subject I dismiss, for I do not believe that it escapes your prudence. Why else would you have confirmed it in deed, unless because you knew that throughout all provinces, answers ever flowed from the apostolic fountain to those who request them?

Especially as often as a question of faith is raised, *I am of opinion that all our brothers and fellow bishops should refer it to none other than to Peter, the author of their name and office*, as even now Your Charity has referred a matter that may be profitable to all the churches throughout the world, in common... [PL 20: 589-90]

Pope Innocent, “by the authority of apostolic power,” deprived Pelagius and Coelestius of ecclesiastical communion. The pope wrote to the five bishops from Africa, praising their zeal and adverting to his official condemnation of Pelagianism in response to the African Councils. [PL 20: 592 sq.]

***Augustine: “If you had been willing
to hear Blessed Innocent...”***

Augustine, bishop of Hippo, appreciated the pope’s action. Together

Keys Over the Christian World

with his friend Alypius, Augustine wrote to Paulinus of Nola. Two councils had been sent to the Apostolic See, wrote Augustine and Alypius, and five African bishops had written an additional private letter “to Pope Innocent of blessed memory,” and “to all of these he answered in a manner which was proper and necessary for a bishop of the Apostolic See.” [Ep. 186. PL 33: 816–17]

Augustine once confronted a Pelagian opponent by citing such western Fathers as Cyprian, Hilary and Ambrose. Excusing himself for not having included the Greek Fathers in his list of authorities, the saint suggested:

I think that the part of the world in which our Lord willed to crown the first of His apostles with a most glorious martyrdom ought to be sufficient for you... If you had been willing to hear Blessed Innocent, who presides over that Church, you would have long since extricated your perilous youth from the nets of the Pelagians... with [these other Fathers] he sits also, *although later in time, prior in rank*. [*Contra Iulianum* I, 13. PL 44: 648]

In a sermon at Carthage in September 417, Augustine pointed out that the case of Pelagianism had been judged once and for all:

...Already two councils have been sent to the Apostolic See about this matter, from which replies have come back. *The case is over; would that the error finally end as well...* [Sermon 131. PL 38: 729]

Later on, citing Pope Innocent’s words, Augustine asked: “*do you see what the Catholic faith teaches, through her minister?*” [*Opus imperf.* VI, 11. PL 45: 1520].

A Disturbance in Palestine

In 417, at his retreat in the holy land, the monk Jerome and his

disciples were severely assaulted. Pelagian heretics were widely suspected of being responsible for the attack. Jerome received a letter of condolence from Pope Innocent, who professed a readiness to act quickly “to seize the Apostolic See’s authority to suppress the whole impiety.” If Jerome was prepared to lodge a specific accusation, Innocent promised, “I will either grant competent judges, or if anything can be done by us with greater urgency and care, I will not hesitate, most beloved son.” Innocent wrote a sharply worded reprimand to John, bishop of Jerusalem, threatening to call him to account unless John showed greater concern for protecting the innocent. [PL 20: 600-02]

Zosimus I [417-418]

Under Pope Innocent’s successor, Zosimus [417-418], the Pelagians tried to work fresh mischief. Pelagius had submitted an appeal to the late Pope Innocent, which was examined by Zosimus. Pelagius had given the impression that he was willing to retract his errors and obey Rome’s decision, by including these words:

This is the faith, most blessed pope, which we have learned in the Catholic Church, and which we have ever held and hold, in which, if anything has been put down out of lack of expertise or caution, *we desire to be corrected by you who hold both the faith and the see of Peter...* [PL 45: 1718]

Coelestius went in person to pursue his appeal to Pope Zosimus. Like Pelagius, Coelestius offered a profession of faith promising to submit to Rome’s decision. St. Augustine preserved this passage from it: “*what I took from the prophets and apostles as my source, I offer for approval to the judgment of Your Apostleship, so that if, perhaps, any error due to ignorance has slipped in... it may be corrected by your decision.*” [De Peccato Orig., 23. PL 44: 397]

The Heretics Reinstated?

Pope Zosimus replied to the African bishops in 417. Great cases merit great gravity in their examination, he wrote, invoking “the authority

of the Apostolic See, to which the decrees of the Fathers sanctioned a certain particular reverence, in honor of the most blessed Peter.” Coelestius had presented himself before the Apostolic See, asking to be cleared of certain undue accusations, the pope continued, and Zosimus had heard the case in St. Clement’s basilica. Coelestius had offered a *libellus* or profession of faith, and Zosimus had pressed him, asking if Coelestius was speaking from the heart. Further, the accusers of Coelestius had not appeared at the trial, and Zosimus had excommunicated them. Accusers of Coelestius, the pope announced, had *two months* to demonstrate that Celestius was insincere; otherwise Coelestius was absolved. [PL 20: 649–53]

The pope wrote again to the African bishops on September 21, 417, announcing that he had received the *libellus* of Pelagius and found it satisfactory; in fact, it had been read publicly, with great rejoicing and even tears! Believing that Pelagius and Coelestius had been unjustly accused, the pope reminded the bishops that it was unjust to convict a man without a scrupulously fair hearing. [PL 20: 654 sq.]

When the African bishops received these letters, they held a council of 214 bishops. Convinced that the Pelagian leaders were insincere, they sent a reply to Zosimus, part of which was preserved by Prosper, a disciple of Augustine. According to Prosper, the bishops wrote: “We establish that the sentence against Pelagius and Coelestius by the venerable Pope Innocent from the see of the most blessed apostle Peter remain,” unless the Pelagians clearly admitted that God’s grace was necessary not only to *know* righteousness, but also to *perform* it. [PL 45: 1723–4]

The deacon Paulinus submitted a formal accusation against Pelagius and Coelestius, pleading:

I implore the justice of Your Blessedness, Lord Zosimus, most blessed pope. The true faith is never disturbed, especially in the apostolic church, in which teachers of depraved doctrine are truly punished as they are easily detected, so that, unless they correct themselves, they may die in the greater evils they have committed, so that in them

may be the true faith, which the apostles taught, and the Roman Church holds along with all teachers of the Catholic faith. If however they [Pelagius and Coelestius] who have now been detected... remain in their unbelief— like other authors of heresy who were long ago judged by the Apostolic See or by the Fathers, and perish by perpetual death outside the bosom of our mother, the Catholic Church— let them be delivered over to the spiritual sword, that they may be killed, even as now Pelagius and Coelestius, who were condemned by Pope Innocent of blessed memory, predecessor of Your Blessedness... [Mansi 4: 381-3]

In rapid fire, Paulinus reminded Pope Zosimus of all the questions with which he, Zosimus, had once pressed Coelestius:

Do you condemn everything contained in the libellus of Paulinus?

Are you aware of the letters which the Apostolic See gave the brethren and fellow bishops of Africa?

Do you condemn whatever we have condemned, and hold what we hold?

Do you condemn whatever has been spread about your name?

Do not lead us in a circle: do you condemn whatever has been objected against you by Paulinus, or rumored about you?

Reminding the pope of his own earlier words, Paulinus waxed indignant:

To whom would this sentence not be sufficient? Who would not accept so salutary, so embraceable and pious a decision, except one who has deviated from the faith? And not only does [Pelagius] not condemn [what was objected against him], but he even contends to the injury of so great a See. Therefore the Roman Church can recognize a guilty man,

who with such an audacious spirit dared to contradict, and not to condemn what Your Blessedness decreed should be condemned... Let that which could lie hidden no longer, but has been made public more manifestly, be cut off by Your Blessedness with the spiritual sword so that the Lord's flock, which you govern with anxious solicitude as a good shepherd, may be torn no longer by the teeth of this wild beast. [Mansi 4: 383–4]

Now it was the turn of Pope Zosimus to be disturbed. The letters from Africa implied that he had absolved unrepentant heretics. Reassuring the bishops that this was not the case, the pope replied:

Although the tradition of the Fathers has assigned such great authority to the Apostolic See that none would dare call its judgments into question, and has always observed this by canons and rules, and current ecclesiastical discipline as well, by its laws, pays due reverence to the name of Peter, from which it descends itself, for canonical antiquity, by the judgment of all, willed this apostle's power to be so great, and also from the very promise of Christ our God, that he might both loose what was bound and bind what was loosed, and an equal condition of authority is given to those who, with his assent, would be found worthy to inherit the authority of his See, for he also has the care of all the churches, especially of this [Roman Church] where he first sat, nor does he permit any gust of wind to shake any privilege or sentence which he himself established by the firm and immovable foundation of his own name, and which none may dare attack except at his own peril: since then Peter is a head with such great authority, and the ensuing endeavors of all the ancients have further confirmed that the Roman Church is established by all human as well as divine laws and discipline, whose place we rule, and hold the authority of his name as you are not unaware, dearest brethren, rather you do know it, and as bishops are bound to know it—

although then our authority is such that nobody may review our sentence, we have done nothing which we did not refer to your knowledge by further letters... [PL 20: 676]

The pope assured the bishops that he had not necessarily believed every syllable uttered by Coelestius, or meant to settle the case without consulting them, adding that he, Zosimus, had granted their request to leave the case as it had stood. [PL 20: 677-8]

The Tractoria of Pope Zosimus

On April 30, 418, the eastern and western rulers intervened. An imperial rescript, preserved in a canonical collection called the *Quesneliana*, condemned Pelagianism and ordered Coelestius and his supporters to be expelled from Rome. [PL 56: 490-92]

When Pope Zosimus summoned Coelestius for another hearing, and Coelestius fled from Rome, finally the pope reacted. In a letter called the *Tractoria*, addressed to all the bishops of the world, he condemned the Pelagian heresy in no uncertain terms, adding to his own decree the constitutions of the African Council, to be signed by all bishops of the world. Marius Mercator writes that the *Tractoria* “was sent throughout the world, and corroborated by the subscriptions of the holy fathers.” [*Commonitorium*, 3. PL 48: 93]

The text of the *Tractoria* has been lost, but Prosper of Aquitaine, a disciple of Augustine, wrote: “Pope Zosimus, of blessed memory, added the force of his sentence to the decrees of the African Councils, and armed the right hands of all the bishops with the sword of Peter, so as to lop off the heads of the impious.” [*Contra collatorem*, 21. PL 51: 271]

Prosper also alluded to the *Tractoria* in his defense of Augustine, written against Cassian. For Prosper it was unthinkable that “*The sacrosanct see of Blessed Peter, which through the mouth of Pope Zosimus, thus speaks to the entire world,*” could have erred in its judgment on Pelagianism. [*Contra Coll.*, 5. PL 51: 228]

Keys Over the Christian World

In the *Carmen de Ingratis*, Prosper eulogized the pope's zeal and vigilance, writing:

The cause of our faith thou dost pursue
More intensely than Africa did do,
And throughout the broad border victims laying low,
The throne of Apostolic Law with thee deployed,
Fierce bowels of conflict thou hast destroyed.
From all cities, holy pontiffs came unto thee,
And in councils of elders thou dost decree
What Rome, of high renown, sees fit to do,
What kingdoms are to follow, too...
[PL 51: 100-101]

Rome's intervention, according to Prosper, crushed the new heresy at its inception:

The rising pestilence was first cut down by Rome, the See of Peter
Which, having become head of the pastoral office for the world
Holds by religion whatever she lacks through arms. [PL 51: 96]

In his work against John Cassian, Prosper wrote:

[The Pelagians] fell when Innocent, of blessed memory,
struck the heads of the deadly error with the apostolic
sword... when Pope Zosimus, of blessed memory, joined
the force of his sentence to the decrees of the African
Councils... and armed the right hand of all bishops with the
sword of Blessed Peter, to cut off the impious... [*Contra Coll.*,
21. PL 51: 271]

Augustine himself praised the joint pastoral action of the African bishops and the popes, writing:

...by the vigilance of episcopal councils, in the assistance of
the Savior who defends his Church, [the Pelagians] have

been condemned in the whole Christian world as well by two venerable bishops of the Apostolic See, pope Innocent and pope Zosimus... we have taken care to have delivered... copies of recent letters from that See, both those addressed specifically to the Africans, and those that went out universally to all the bishops... [Ep. 190. PL 33: 865]

Commenting on a passage from the *Tractoria*, Augustine wrote: “In these words of the Apostolic See, the Catholic faith is so ancient, so well founded, so certain and so clear that it would be most unlawful for a Christian to doubt of it.” [PL 33: 865–6]

Augustine attributed Pope Zosimus’ earlier indulgence towards the Pelagians to a certain leniency, citing assurances that the Pelagians would submit to Rome’s teaching on grace. Coelestius, for example had “professed to assent to the letters of blessed Pope Innocent.” [*Contra duas epp. Pelag.* II, 3–4. (5–6). PL 44, 574–6] Coelestius also had promised to “condemn whatever [the Apostolic See] would condemn.” [*De Gr. Chr.* II, 7 (8). PL 44: 389]

Because Pelagius had singled out St. Ambrose for praise, Augustine pointed out that it is the *Roman* faith that shines especially in the works of Ambrose. [*De Gratia Christi*, 43. PL 44: 381]

Finally, the priest Gennadius of Marseilles, late in the fifth century, noted that “Innocent, bishop of the city of Rome, wrote a decree of the western and eastern Churches given against the Pelagians, which his successor, Pope Zosimus, later promulgated more extensively.” [*De Scriptoris Ecclesiasticis*, 43. PL 58: 1083]

Augustine Refutes Julian of Eclanum

Pelagianism did gain one more apologist: Julian, the learned but long-winded bishop of Eclanum, who convinced a group of bishops not to sign the *Tractoria*. Marius Mercator wrote, in his *Commonitorium*, that the recalcitrants were deposed “not only by imperial laws but also by priestly

Keys Over the Christian World

statutes,” and that many thought the better of it, “returned as suppliants to the Apostolic See, were accepted, and received their churches again.” [PL 48: 94-5]

Before that happened, the excommunicates had sent a letter to the Apostolic See, announcing that they were appealing to a “Plenary Synod.” [PL 45: 1732]

As for Julian of Eclanum, Prosper added that later on, Pope Sixtus III refused his request to be allowed to return to Rome’s communion. [Chron., A.D. 439. PL 51: 598]

St. Augustine had extremely cordial relations with Zosimus’ successor, Boniface I [418-422], and once wrote that Pope Boniface had used a “salutary severity” with the Pelagians. [Ep. 20*, 3] When Boniface forwarded letters of Julian’s supporters to Augustine, the great African took up the cudgels in a work entitled, *Contra duas epistolas Pelagianorum*. In the preface to Pope Boniface, Augustine wrote:

I had heard, by your incomparable reputation, and by frequent and utterly reliable messengers, blessed and venerable pope Boniface, how full of God’s grace you are... For neither do you disdain, *you whose thoughts are not lifted up, howbeit that you preside more loftily*, to be the friend of the lowly, and make a return for love bestowed upon you... I have made bold to write something to Your Beatitude about those matters which now excite all our episcopal care... to vigilance on behalf of the Lord’s flock... *pastoral vigilance is common to all of us who exercise the episcopal office, although you are pre-eminent, on a loftier summit...* I have decided, therefore, to send these things to Your Holiness, not that you may learn anything, but so that you may examine them, *and if perhaps you find anything disagreeable, correct it...* [PL 44: 550-51]

Julian had accused Pope Zosimus of ‘prevaricating’ because that

pope originally had shown some leniency to Coelestius. Augustine refuted the charge in *Contra Iulianum*. [Bk VI, 12. PL 44: 842]

New outbreaks of Pelagianism

A British bishop, Fastidius, had been indoctrinated with Pelagianism during a trip to Sicily. When he returned home, Fastidius—seconded by a certain Agricola, son of a bishop named Severian—began spreading Pelagianism. Alerted by the deacon Palladius, Pope Celestine [422–432] sent Germanus, bishop of Auxerre, to restore the true faith in Britain. [St. Prosper, *Contra Collatorem*, 21. PL 51: 271]

Prosper, who wrote of this mission, adds that Pope Celestine not only preserved the faith in Britain, but at the same time contributed to the conversion of Ireland:

With no less care he [Celestine] freed Britain from this disease, when he banished from that remote island certain enemies of grace, natives of the country, and having ordained a bishop for the Irish, while he labored to keep a Roman island in the Catholic faith, he even made a barbarous island Christian. [PL 51: 271]

The Semi-Pelagian Controversy

The condemnation of Pelagianism did not end theological disputes about the relationship between grace and free will. About 430, a controversy broke out in Gaul when two men familiar with monastic circles at Marseilles, Prosper and Hilary, complained that certain priests of Gaul, including John Cassian, were teaching novel, erroneous doctrines about grace, exaggerating the capacity of free will, and criticizing St. Augustine's teaching. When the complaints reached the Apostolic See, Pope Celestine decided to intervene.

Late in his pontificate, Pope Celestine [422–432] wrote to the bishops of Gaul. If the complaints were true, he declared, "let novelty cease attacking antiquity." Attacks on the memory of Augustine were not going

Keys Over the Christian World

to be tolerated. “Augustine, a man of holy memory, we always had in our communion,” the pope declared; “he was always considered one of the best of teachers by my predecessors as well.” Celestine warned the bishops not to let priests introduce “undisciplined questions” in the preaching of the faith. [PL 50: 528–30]

In a treatise called *Commonitorium* the priest Vincent, a monk of Lerins [c. 435] in Gaul, with this letter in mind, cited a “twofold authority of the Apostolic See, one from the holy, venerable Pope Sixtus, who now graces the Roman Church, and the other from his predecessor Pope Celestine, of blessed memory...” [PL 50: 684]

Because his treatise concentrated on the antiquity and universality of the Catholic faith, Vincent had particular praise for the phrase, *desinat... incessere novitas vetustatem*, “let novelty cease to attack antiquity,” calling it “the blessed sentence of the blessed Celestine.” [PL 50: 684]

Pope Celestine’s letter was accompanied by a collection called “authoritative decisions of previous bishops of the Apostolic See, on the grace of God.” The collection was intended to put forward “what the most sacred see of Blessed Peter, through the ministry of her prelates, has established and taught against the enemies of God’s grace.” [PL 50: 531 sq.]

The collection confirms the orthodox doctrine on grace, refuting errors which theologians today call semi-Pelagianism. The sin of Adam, the texts teach, has harmed all men— nobody can recover from its effects by free will alone. All of us need God’s daily help, in order to overcome temptations. Nobody uses free will well except through Christ. Every holy thought and movement of good will is from God. Even the good works and merits of the saints are God’s gifts. [PL 50: 531 sq.]

Certain Pelagians had attempted to find refuge with Nestorius, archbishop of Constantinople. Without accusing Nestorius of being a Pelagian, Pope Celestine warned him not to give the Pelagians any quarter. [PL 50: 438 sq.]

Later on, Pope Gelasius [492-496] condemned a revival of Pelagianism. Writing to Honorius, a bishop of Dalmatia, the pope noted that the heresy had been condemned long ago by the Apostolic See, first by Innocent of blessed memory, and later by Zosimus, Boniface, Celestine, Sixtus III and Leo the Great. [Thiel, 321-5, 571 sq.]

“Augustine, a man of holy memory...”

“Augustine, a man of holy memory, we always had in our communion.”
—Pope Celestine I.

When Celestine I [422-432] succeeded to the Apostolic See, Augustine, bishop of Hippo, congratulated him, and informed him of an unfortunate affair in Africa. In the diocese of Hippo, Augustine explained, there was a remote outpost known as Fussala. Thanks to the zeal of the local clergy, several of whom had been martyred, the people of Fussala had converted from Donatism to the Catholic faith. Anxious to give them their own bishop, Augustine had ordained a young lector named Anthony, from Augustine’s own monastery. Unfortunately, Anthony had oppressed and stolen from the people of Fussala, alienating them by his tyranny and rapacity. A local council had deprived Anthony of the episcopate, demanding that he make restitution. [Ep. 209. PL 33: 953-4]

In a recently discovered letter, Augustine mentions this case, noting that Anthony had appealed “to the venerable Pope Boniface [418-422],” who had appointed judges to determine if Anthony was telling the truth. Complaining that Anthony had lied, Augustine had hastened to send his own report to Rome. [Ep. 20*: 11-12, 26]

Anthony had lodged an appeal with the primate of Numidia, who had depicted him to Pope Boniface as an innocent man. The local people, fearing that the military would be used to enforce the Apostolic See’s sentence, had written to Pope Celestine, asking him to deliver them from the menace of Anthony. Seconding the request of the people, Augustine pleaded with Pope Celestine not to restore the unworthy bishop:

I beseech you by the blood of Christ, by the memory of the apostle Peter, who warned the prelates of Christian peoples not to dominate over the brethren violently, do not suffer these things to take place. [Ep. 209. PL 33: 956]

Augustine pointed out that Pope Boniface had restored Anthony on the condition that Anthony had described matters truthfully. Clearly, that had not been the case. [PL 33: 955]

Anthony had used an “all or nothing” argument: “either I should have sat in my chair [i.e., been acquitted], or I should not be a bishop.” Defending the sentence against Anthony, which had fallen between the extremes, Augustine pointed out that similar sentences had been given in other cases, “with the Apostolic See judging, or confirming the judgments of others.” Examples of such cases, according to Augustine, were both very ancient and recent. Augustine implored Celestine to show mercy to the people of Fussala, and to Anthony himself: “Both deserve your mercy: the former, lest they suffer evil, [and] the latter, lest he do it.” [PL 33: 956]

The Crisis of Caesarea in Mauretania

In one of his letters, Augustine mentions that in 418 he had been drawn to Caesarea of Mauretania on ecclesiastical business which was “enjoined on us by the venerable Pope Zosimus, bishop of the Apostolic See.” [Ep. 190. PL 33: 857]

Possidius, in his *Life* of St. Augustine, also mentions the saint’s sojourn in Caesarea of Mauretania, “where letters of the Apostolic See had compelled him to go, along with other fellow bishops of his, so as to conclude certain ecclesiastical business.” [PL 32: 45]

What was the exact nature of this business? Scholars are not entirely certain. Recently discovered letters of Augustine, however, shed light on Augustine’s activities in that area one year later.

Sometime in 419, Deuterius, bishop of Caesarea in Mauretania, died.

The local people wanted a certain Honorius, a bishop from the area of Cartenna, as their new bishop. Their choice did not sit well with the bishops of the province, who objected that it was uncanonical to transfer a bishop from one see to another in this manner. Honorius was allowed tentatively to stay at Caesarea, but eventually the bishops of the province demanded that he leave Caesarea under pain of excommunication. Honorius complied and left the city, but a popular uprising ensued at Caesarea. [St. Augustine, Ep. 22★, cf. REA 30 (1984), 48 sq., 251 sq.]

Meanwhile Augustine, after consultation with the local bishops, had sent a report to Rome, but declined to send the response to his colleagues, because as yet there was no metropolitan. [Ep. 22★, 6. Ed. Divjak, 354] In these delicate circumstances Augustine felt that it was more expedient if the case were settled at Rome. The saint wrote, “It is highly difficult that the case be settled here, which the animosity of men and necessity itself require to be concluded by a judgment of the Apostolic See.” [Ep. 22★, 11. Ed. I. Divjak, 362] The outcome of the case is not known.

Augustine, Champion of the Faith

In another newly discovered letter, Augustine mentioned excommunications pronounced against entire households because of an alleged fault of one member. The saint hoped to raise the issue in an African council and, “if necessary, to write to the Apostolic See, so that in these cases what we must follow may be established and confirmed by the concordant authority of all.” [Ep. 1★, 5. Ed. Divjak, 50]

Augustine continued to defend the Church and the Apostolic See throughout his life. His sentiments can be summarized by this passage:

Shall we then hesitate to hide ourselves in the bosom of that Church which, by the confession of the human race itself, *has obtained the summit of authority from the Apostolic See*, through the succession of bishops, while heretics uselessly howled against her, condemned partly by the people’s judgment itself, partly also by the gravity of councils, and

Keys Over the Christian World

partly by the majesty of miracles? To refuse to grant her the primacy is either the utmost impiety, or headlong arrogance. [*De. Util. Cred.*, 17. PL 42: 91]

The saint from Hippo was a model of learning, a model of obedience and a model of respect throughout his priestly career.

Chapter IX

The Keys at Ephesus

Several years into his pontificate, Pope Celestine I [422-431] received a letter from Cyril, bishop of Alexandria. If it were lawful to keep silence, and not to inform Your Holiness by letter about dangers to the faith, I would prefer to do so and live out a quiet life, Cyril wrote. However, that was not possible, Cyril explained, adding:

...because in these matters God requires vigilance of us, and the ancient custom of the churches persuades us to communicate these things to Your Holiness, I write again of necessity. [PG 77: 80]

Nestorius, bishop of Constantinople, had denied that Mary, the blessed Virgin, ought to be called *Theotokos*, or “Mother of God.” It was more proper, Nestorius opined, to call her “Mother of Christ.” Alarmed at the innovation, Cyril wrote:

Deign therefore to put in writing what seems proper to you. Is it necessary to remain in communion with him, or should it be proclaimed boldly that nobody is in communion with one who believes and teaches such things? It is also necessary that Your Piety’s opinion be manifested by letter to the bishops of Macedonia and all the east. This will give them the opportunity they desire of persisting with one mind in the same opinion, and contending earnestly for the true faith, which is under assault. [PG 77: 84-5]

Pope Celestine took the accusations seriously. At a Roman council, he approved Cyril’s faith, which was the traditional faith of the Church: the

Keys Over the Christian World

Virgin had given birth to a Person who was both God and man; hence the blessed Virgin Mary was truly the *theotokos*, the one who had brought forth God from her womb, given birth to God— Mother of God. Pope Celestine cited a hymn which, he said, St. Ambrose had taught the faithful to sing in unison at Christmas:

Come, Redeemer of the Gentiles,
Show forth your birth from a Virgin,
Let all the world marvel,
Such a birth is befitting to God.

Celestine also cited letters which his predecessor, Damasus, had written to Paulinus of Antioch, anathematizing those who asserted that there were two Sons of God: one who existed from all eternity, and another who had taken flesh from the Virgin Mary. [Mansi 4: 548–52]

Celestine to Cyril: “You Shall Execute This Sentence...”

Pope Celestine wrote a series of letters dated August 11, 430, addressed to Cyril, to certain important bishops of the east, to Nestorius, and finally to the clergy and faithful of Constantinople.

The pope commended Cyril for being a good shepherd, calling Nestorius a bad pastor who was not so much abandoning the sheep as *mangling* them. Although profoundly saddened by the new heresy, Celestine rejoiced at least that the Churches of Rome and Alexandria had the same faith in the Incarnation. Besides, he reflected, if Christ showed so much care to save the lost sheep, what labor must not be expended when the *pastor of the flock*, Nestorius himself, had become a lost sheep and even a wolf threatening to destroy the flock? [PL 50: 459–63]

St. Celestine, then, still hoped for the conversion of Nestorius. On the other hand, if the bishop of Constantinople persisted in error, he had to be cut off from the Church. Pope Celestine gave Cyril these instructions:

Wherefore, having assumed unto yourself the authority of our See, and using our stead and our place with authority, you shall execute this sentence with the utmost strictness, that is: unless, within the space of ten days to be counted from when he receives this admonition of ours, he condemns his perverse doctrines in a written confession, and confirms that he holds the same faith about the birth of Christ our God as the Roman Church, and the Church of Your Holiness, and the universal devotion hold, Your Holiness will promptly provide for that Church, and let him know that he must altogether be removed from our body... We have written the same things to our brethren and fellow bishops John, Rufus, Juvenal and Flavian, so that our sentence, or rather the divine sentence of Christ our God concerning him, may be made known. [PL 50: 463]

The pope was referring to some of the principal bishops in the east, who needed to be informed of Rome's decisions: John of Antioch, papal vicar Rufus of Thessalonica, Juvenal of Jerusalem and Flavian of Philippi, metropolitan of Macedonia.

***Pope Celestine:
“Sentence has been passed against Nestorius...”***

Writing to the bishops, the pope expressed great sorrow at the “perverse” doctrines of Nestorius, but because inaction in such a matter was tantamount to dangerous connivance, Celestine added, “we have separated from our communion both Bishop Nestorius, and anybody who follows him in preaching these things.” Since the day Nestorius began to teach heresy, the pope continued, anybody excommunicated by him or his followers remained within Rome's communion. [PL 50: 467]

“Sentence has been passed against Nestorius by us, or rather by Christ our God,” the pope wrote; unless Nestorius retracted his heresy within ten days, and subscribed to the faith of the Churches of Rome and Alexandria, and of the Universal Church regarding Christ's birth, Nestorius

would be outside of the body of bishops. [PL 50: 467-9]

Pope Celestine wrote to Nestorius, demanding a retraction of the new teaching. “We have approved, and we do approve, the faith of the bishop of Alexandria,” the pope continued; “having been admonished by him, think again as we do, if you wish to be with us.” Pope Celestine demanded that Nestorius reinstate anybody that had been unjustly excommunicated, adding: “unless what we say is done, the one who cast them out must himself be cast out.” [PL 50: 481-3]

The pope concluded:

Know openly that this is our sentence, that unless you preach what the Roman and Alexandrian and the universal Catholic Church hold concerning Christ our God... within ten days of when you hear of this [sentence], know that you have been cast out of the universal Catholic Church. [PL 50: 483]

The pope wrote to the clergy and faithful of Constantinople, warning them against the perverse sentiments of Nestorius, an enemy of both Scripture and tradition. By what right can Nestorius even call himself a bishop? the pope asked. Celestine urged the faithful to adhere to the faith of previous bishops of Constantinople, for instance John Chrysostom, Atticus, Sisinnius. Nestorius had to be resisted, the pope remarked, and “because our presence seemed necessary in such a matter, we have delegated our place to my holy brother Cyril.” The pope informed the faithful that Nestorius had ten days to retract. [PL 50: 485 sq.]

In Defense of the Faith: John Cassian

John Cassian was a monk who had spent long years in the east, and was familiar with the legendary monastic figures of the Egyptian desert. After migrating to the west, Cassian had become friends with Leo, archdeacon of the Roman Church and future pope. At Leo’s request, Cassian, who had settled into monastic life in Gaul, wrote a rebuttal of Nestorius

called *De Incarnatione*. In the preface, Cassian described how Leo “required” and “commanded” him to write against “the recent heresy and new enemy of the faith,” adding: “I obey your request; I obey your command.”

In the main body of the work, citing various individuals of the New Testament, to show that their faith was irreconcilable with the Nestorian heresy, Cassian, appealing to the “faith of the supreme apostle,” remarked:

But if, perhaps, the authority of a greater individual is agreeable to you... let us question that supreme disciple among disciples and master among masters, who, ruling the helm of the Roman Church, held the principality of the priesthood as he also held that of faith. Tell us, therefore, tell us, we beg you, O Peter, prince of the apostles, tell us—how must the Churches believe in God? For it is fitting that you, who have been taught by the Lord, teach us, and open to us the door of which you have received the key... for it is certain that nobody shall be able to enter the door of the kingdom, unless the key, placed by you in the Churches, shall have opened unto him. [Bk III, 12. PL 50: 66-7]

St. Cyril's Twelve Chapters

Meanwhile, an Alexandrian Council under Cyril promulgated a long synodical letter in late November 430. The letter ended with twelve propositions, known as “chapters” or “anathematisms,” which Cyril expected Nestorius to sign. The chapters insisted on the unity of the natures in Christ, calling it in Greek *henosis physike*, and also a “hypostatic union,” or union according to person. [Mansi 4: 1067 sq.]

The letter from Pope Celestine had said nothing about anathematisms; Cyril had composed them on his own initiative. Although the phrase “hypostatic union” became commonly accepted in Catholic theology, signifying that the two natures of Christ were united in His one

person, another phrase used by Cyril—“one incarnate nature”—was more ambiguous, and caused heated debates. [The formula ‘one incarnate nature’ appears in St. Cyril, epp. 44, 45, 46. PG 77: 225, 232, 240–41, and *Defense of the Twelve Chapters*. PG 76, 349]

John, bishop of Antioch and a friend of Nestorius, had urged Nestorius to accept the term *theotokos*. However, John was disturbed by the anathematisms. He considered some of Cyril’s expressions open to question, even suspect of Apollinarianism. Theodoret of Cyrus, a bishop of John’s jurisdiction, endeavored to refute Cyril’s anathematisms, while Cyril defended his writings against the criticism of the Antiochians. [PG 76: 315 sq.; PG 77: 1452–7]

In early December, a delegation of Egyptian bishops handed Nestorius the documents of the Synod of Alexandria, including the anathematisms and the notification of Celestine’s sentence. The Egyptians soon learned, however, that less than three weeks earlier—on November 19—Emperors Theodosius II [408–450] and Valentinian III [424–455] had called an ecumenical council. The rulers had ordered all metropolitans within their territories to meet at Ephesus by Pentecost 431. [Mansi 4: 1112–16]

Now that Nestorius had gotten a reprieve, Cyril queried Rome once more: should Nestorius be admitted as a member of the council, or had Celestine’s original sentence taken effect? Replying on May 7, 431, the pope reminded Cyril that God does not want the death of the sinner. Celestine urged Cyril to try to bring Nestorius back to the truth. [PL 50: 501–2]

Celestine to His Legates: “You are to judge their teachings...”

Pope Celestine chose three legates to represent him at the council: the bishops Arcadius and Projectus, and the priest Philip, and gave them these instructions:

...when, with God’s help, Your Charity reaches your

destination, do all your planning with our brother and fellow bishop Cyril, and do whatever he decides is necessary. We also order the authority of the Apostolic See to be preserved. Indeed the instructions given to you say that if it comes to disputing [among bishops], *you are to judge their teachings, not enter the fray...* [Mansi 4: 556]

The council was scheduled to begin on June 7, 431. Cyril came to Ephesus with fifty bishops— half of the great Alexandrian Synod. Memnon, bishop of Ephesus, gathered another fifty or so bishops. The delegations from Thessalonica and Jerusalem arrived a few days after Pentecost. Rome’s legates had not arrived yet, nor had the delegation under John of Antioch. Two bishops within the sphere of Antioch— Alexander of Apamea and Alexander of Hierapolis— informed the council that John did not want the council to be delayed any longer. Clearly John had been dragging his feet, unwilling to participate in the inevitable condemnation of his friend Nestorius. [Mansi 4: 1331]

St. Cyril opened the council on Monday, June 22; the acts record that Cyril was also “holding the place of the most holy and most sacred Celestine, archbishop of the Roman Church.” [Mansi 4: 1123]

Peter, an Alexandrian priest and lead notary, briefly reviewed the disturbances Nestorius had caused in the Church, how Cyril had alerted Celestine of Rome, and how Celestine had sent back appropriate replies. The Nicene Creed was read, followed by a letter of Cyril to Nestorius, and his response to Cyril. One by one, the bishops acclaimed Cyril’s letter as entirely in harmony with the faith of Nicea, and condemned the reply of Nestorius. [Mansi 4: 1127 sq.]

The council also listened to a letter from Capreolus, bishop of Carthage. Although unable to come, Capreolus was confident that the bishops would condemn any new errors against the faith, “which the Apostolic See’s authority and the bishops’ unanimous sentence have condemned.” Cyril praised Capreolus for defending the ancient faith and opposing impious new teachings. [Mansi 4: 1210 sq.]

“With tears we have... come to this sorrowful sentence”

Although the Roman legates had not yet arrived, the council passed this sentence on Nestorius, who after having been summoned three times had refused to appear:

Necessarily compelled by the sacred canons and by the letter of our most holy father and fellow minister Celestine, bishop of the Roman Church, with tears we have necessarily come to this sorrowful sentence against him. Therefore our Lord Jesus Christ, who has been blasphemed by him, has decreed through the present most holy synod that the same Nestorius is deprived of the episcopal dignity and of all priestly fellowship. [Mansi 4: 1212. ACO I: 1: 2: 54]

After signing the sentence, the bishops sent it to Nestorius, “the new Judas,” and notified the people of Ephesus and the clergy of Constantinople of his condemnation. Nestorius fought back, sending the emperor a complaint signed by ten bishops. The council rebutted them in its own report to the emperor, remarking that “Celestine, the most holy and God-beloved bishop of Great Rome... had condemned the heretical teachings of Nestorius before our sentence, and had previously informed us in passing sentence on him...” [Mansi 4: 1227 sq.]

A Rival Council Under John of Antioch

To complicate matters further, the party led by John of Antioch arrived at Ephesus and held its own council, excommunicating Cyril and Memnon of Ephesus. Concerned at the growing discord, and unhappy that the bishops had not met in one council, as he had instructed, Emperor Theodosius refused to recognize either council and demanded that the bishops remain at Ephesus for an imperial investigation. [Mansi 4: 1259 sq., 1377-80]

At this juncture, Rome’s legates finally arrived. On July 10, Cyril,

who was once again holding the place of St. Celestine, held a second session at the home of Memnon, bishop of Ephesus. The priest Philip spoke first, remarking:

We give thanks to the holy and adorable Trinity because it has deigned to allow us to take part in your holy council. Indeed some time ago our most holy and most blessed Pope Celestine, bishop of the Apostolic See, defined with regard to this present case and business, through his letters to the holy man Cyril... letters which were read to your holy council. And now once again, for the corroboration of the Catholic faith, he has sent letters through us... command them to be read appropriately to the holy council, and to be placed in the ecclesiastical records. [Mansi 4: 1282. ACO I: Vol. 1: Pt. 3: 53]

The bishops Arcadius and Projectus spoke in the same vein, adding:

Let Your Beatitude command that the letters brought to you from the holy, all-venerable Pope Celestine, bishop of the Apostolic See, be recited to you, from which you may see what care he bears for all the churches. [Mansi 4: 1282. ACO I: 1: 3: 54]

Cyril concurred, remarking, "Let the letter of the most holy and most reverend Celestine, bishop of the apostolic see of the Romans, be read to the holy synod with due honor." [Mansi 4: 1282. ACO I: 1: 3: 54]

The pope's letter was read in Latin, and at the request of the synod, in a Greek translation. Reminding the bishops that they were standing near the relics of St. John the Apostle, Celestine urged them to practice true charity, to be of one mind and to take up arms in defense of the traditional, apostolic faith. Celestine recommended the persons of his legates, "who are to be present at the proceedings, and execute what was previously laid down by us. To whom your holiness will grant your assent, we have no doubt..." [Mansi 4: 1281 sq.]

After the letter was read, the bishops exclaimed:

This is a just judgment. To the new Paul, Celestine, to the new Paul, Cyril, to Celestine the guardian of the faith, to Celestine of one mind with the synod, to Celestine the entire synod gives thanks. One Celestine, one Cyril, one faith of the synod, one faith of the whole world. [Mansi 4: 1287; ACO I: 1: 3: 57]

Projectus, one of the Roman legates, addressed the council:

Let Your Holiness consider the decree of the letter from the holy and venerable father, bishop Celestine, who has exhorted Your Holiness, not as teaching the ignorant but as warning those with awareness... so that you may order a conclusion to be put to what he both defined long ago, and has deigned to call to mind now... [Mansi 4: 1287; ACO I: 1: 3: 57]

“A sentence and decree... which we too have followed”

Firmus, bishop of Caesaria in Cappadocia, observed that Celestine, in his letters to Cyril of Alexandria, to Juvenal of Jerusalem, to Rufus of Thessalonica and the churches of Constantinople and Antioch, had given “a sentence and decree” concerning the present business, “which we too have followed.” The deadline for the correction of Nestorius had long since expired, Firmus continued, and Nestorius did not answer our summons; “therefore we have executed the decree, pronouncing a canonical and apostolic judgment against him.” [Mansi 4: 1288 sq.; ACO I: 1: 3: 58]

The priest Philip congratulated the bishops, remarking:

We give thanks to your holy and venerable synod that when the letter of our holy and blessed pope was recited to you, as holy members you united yourselves to your holy head, by your holy words and also by your holy exclamations. For

Your Holiness is not unaware that the blessed apostle Peter is head of the apostles and of the entire faith. [ACO I: 1: 3: 58]

Because the legates had been delayed and arrived late, Philip asked the council to show them its acts, “so that we too may confirm them, in accordance with the sentence of our blessed pope and the present holy synod.” [Mansi 4: 1290; ACO I: 1: 3: 57]

Theodotus, bishop of Ancyra, remarked:

The God of all has shown that the holy synod’s sentence was just by the letter of Celestine... which was brought here, and by Your Piety’s arrival. For you have demonstrated both the zeal... of Celestine, and his concern for the faith. [Mansi 4: 1290; ACO I: 1: 3: 58–9]

Because the legates had sought to examine the deposition of Nestorius directly from the council records, Theodotus continued, they could be assured of the synod’s zeal, the justice of its sentence, and its agreement with the faith so loudly preached by Celestine. [Mansi 4: 1290; ACO I: 1: 3: 59]

“Celestine, who has entrusted this care to us...”

The third session met on July 11, at Memnon’s house. The legate Philip praised the council for having sentenced Nestorius canonically, and asked that the acts be reread, “so that, following the decree of the most holy pope Celestine who has entrusted this care to us, and also that of Your Holiness, we may be able to confirm your judgments.” The council complied, and when the sentence against Nestorius was reread, Philip said:

It is doubtful to no one, indeed it is known to all ages that the holy and most blessed Peter, prince and head of the apostles, pillar of the faith and foundation of the Catholic Church received the keys of the kingdom from

our Lord Jesus Christ, Savior and Redeemer of the human race, and that to him was given the power of binding and loosing sins, who up to this very age ever lives and judges in his successors. Accordingly our holy and most blessed father, Bishop Celestine, his successor in order who also holds his place, has sent us to this holy synod, supplying for his own presence...

Nestorius, accordingly, author of this new perversity and head of evils, having been summoned—as we have seen from the synodal acts—and warned in accordance with the decrees of the fathers, that is, canonical discipline, refused contemptuously to stand trial... not only did he allow the deadline granted by the Apostolic See to elapse, but he allowed a much greater length of time to pass.

What has been pronounced against him—who with impious mouth and a hostile spirit has had the audacity to utter blasphemous words against our Lord Jesus Christ—stands firm, therefore, in accordance with the decree of all the churches [for bishops of both the eastern and western church were present at this priestly gathering, either by themselves or at least by their legates]... Wherefore let Nestorius understand that he is cut off from the communion of the priesthood of the Catholic Church. [Mansi 4: 1295–8; ACO I: 1: 3: 60–61]

Arcadius, another papal legate, concurred, remarking that Nestorius brought the council “great grief, and sorrow full of tears.” According to Arcadius, not only had Nestorius shown contempt for the “precept of the Apostolic See,” but he also “spurned the admonition and exhortation of all the holy bishops, by which he could have regained health”; Nestorius had pronounced a doctrine “full of blasphemy against our Lord Jesus Christ,” wallowed in ignorance of the traditions of the fathers, forgotten the preaching of the prophets and the tradition of the gospel and apostles. Arcadius concluded:

...moreover, pursuant to the decree of the most holy Celestine, pope of the Apostolic See, who has deigned to send us as executors in this matter, and the decrees of the holy synod, let Nestorius know that he has been stripped of the episcopal dignity, and is outside of the entire church and of the communion of all the bishops. [Mansi 4: 1298; ACO I: 1: 3: 61-2]

Finally Projectus, noting that Nestorius had persisted in heresy, added:

Wherefore I, by authority of the delegation of the Apostolic See, as executor of the sentence together with the brethren define that Nestorius, enemy of the truth and corrupter of the faith, has been removed from the rank of episcopal office and, further, from the communion of all orthodox bishops. [Mansi 4: 1299.ACO I:Vol. 1: Pt. 3: 62]

St. Cyril took the floor, adding:

The depositions given by the most holy and God-beloved bishops Arcadius and Projectus, and also by the pious priest Philip, have been made manifest to the synod. For they have deposed as filling the place of the Apostolic See and the bishops of the entire western synod. Since then they have executed what had already been laid down by the most holy and God-beloved bishop Celestine, and have concurred with the sentence pronounced against the heretic Nestorius by the holy synod gathered in this metropolis of Ephesus, let the actions of yesterday and today be joined to the preceding acts and offered to their piety, so that they, in the customary manner, may by their own signature make manifest their canonical agreement with all of us. [Mansi 4: 1299.ACO I: 1: 3: 62]

Arcadius agreed: “in accordance with the acts of this holy synod, we

Keys Over the Christian World

cannot but confirm their doctrine with our subscriptions.” Finally the council itself spoke:

Since the most reverend and most religious bishops and legates Arcadius and Projectus, and Philip, priest and legate of the Apostolic See, have spoken in order, let them consequently fulfill their promise, confirming the acts by their signature. [Mansi 4: 1299.ACO I: 1: 3: 63]

Beginning with the Roman legates, the fathers subscribed to the condemnation of Nestorius. The council also wrote to Theodosius, emperor of the East, and Valentinian, emperor of the West, praising the rulers’ zeal and concern for the faith. Although the western bishops hadn’t been able to come to the council, they agreed in faith with the fathers of Ephesus, the letter said; even before the bishops had come to Ephesus, Celestine, “the most holy bishop of Great Rome,” had written and entrusted his own place to Cyril; the Roman legates represented not only Celestine but the whole synod of the west. Nestorius, then, stood condemned by a truly representative council of the entire Christian world. The bishops asked to be allowed to provide a new bishop for the church of Constantinople, and return home. [Mansi 4: 1299 sq.]

The Council and the Orientals

The council turned its attention to John of Antioch and the “Orientals,” as his supporters were called. John had held a separate council and excommunicated Cyril and Memnon of Ephesus. The “Orientals” accused Cyril of Apollinarianism, the heresy which denies that Christ had a human soul. In a letter to Rufus, papal vicar at Thessalonica, the Orientals recalled how Damasus had deposed the leaders of Apollinarianism. [Mansi 4: 1417]

When John of Antioch refused to comply with a triple summons from the bishops at Ephesus, they excommunicated him and his supporters—a little over thirty bishops. Juvenal, bishop of Jerusalem, remarked that John should have defended himself before the apostolic see of Great Rome, and

obey and honor the apostolic church of Jerusalem, “by which, according to apostolic order and tradition, it is customary that the throne of Antioch be guided and judged.” A note in the margin of the Greek acts of the council interprets Juvenal’s words as applying to the see of Rome, citing the cases of Paul of Samosata [272] and the fourth-century rivalry between Meletius and Paulinus, as examples when Rome had judged the affairs of Antioch. [Mansi 4: 1305 sq., 1312–13]

The bishops at Ephesus also wrote to pope Celestine, praising his zeal for all the churches and signifying their agreement with him, not only in the condemnation of Nestorius but also regarding Rome’s earlier condemnation of Pelagianism. [Mansi 4: 1330 sq.]

On March 15, 432, Pope Celestine wrote to Maximianus, the new bishop of Constantinople, encouraging him to follow the example of earlier holy bishops of Constantinople, John, Atticus, Sisinnius. Urging Maximianus to resist the Pelagian heretics, Celestine penned these words of encouragement:

Take up the helm of the ship familiar to you, and govern it as we know you have learned from your predecessors... follow that fisherman who trampled underfoot the waves of the sea, that he might follow Christ the Lord, whom he had seen walking on the sea... [PL 50: 547]

Arnobius and the Apostolic See

According to Dom Germain Morin, Arnobius the Younger was a Roman monk of the mid-fifth century. Arnobius wrote a commentary on the Psalms, where he frequently interpreted them through the eyes of Peter; for example, commenting on the Vulgate version of Ps. 138 (139), Arnobius wrote, “these things Peter speaks in the Church, and the Church pronounces in Peter.” [PL 53: 548]

Commenting on Ps. 106 (107), 33: “He changed rivers into desert, and springs of water into thirsty ground,” Arnobius wrote: “wandering in

the desert of this world, until he arrived at Rome, [Peter] preached the baptism of Jesus Christ, in which, to this very day, all rivers are blessed by Peter. He ‘changed springs of water into thirsty land,’ so that whoever should depart from the Church of Peter would perish of thirst.” [PL 53: 490]

Calling himself a “defender of the Apostolic See,” Arnobius identified his faith with that of the Roman Church, writing: “Our confession, that is, that of the Apostolic See of Blessed Peter, which began with the apostle himself, is the following...” [PL 53: 241, 272]

Commenting on Cyril’s attitude towards Pope Celestine, Arnobius declared that Cyril “considered it praiseworthy to have something corrected by him who held the citadel of the pontificate [i.e., Celestine].” [PL 53: 289. Cf. Morin, *Etudes, textes, découvertes*, Maredsous 1913, 352-4]

A sermon attributed to St. Augustine or to Quodvultdeus, bishop of Carthage [437-453], expresses similar sentiments, contending: “You are not considered to hold the true faith of the Catholic [Church], who do not teach that the Roman faith is to be kept. For you seek, as far as in you lies, to subvert the Catholic foundations of the faith itself...” [PL Suppl. 3: 286-7]

“When Celestine held the apostolic height...”

Pope Celestine died in 432. At Rome, the priest Peter, who founded Saint Sabina’s basilica, commemorated him in an inscription which begins:

*When Celestine held the apostolic height,
And shone as first bishop throughout the world...*
[ICUR 2: 24]

St. Celestine was widely venerated in the Christian east. The Coptic Synaxarion commemorates “Celestine, pope of Rome” on 3 Abib, or June 27. [PO 17: 618]

The Ethiopian Church commemorates St. Celestine and his predecessor Innocent on 3 Hamle, July 10. [PO 7: 225-28]

The Byzantine Church commemorated St. Celestine on April 8. The Menologion of Basil Porphyrogenitus includes this notice:

Our holy father Celestine... after the death of the holy bishops Innocent, Boniface and Zosimus, was ordained pope of Great Rome... together with St. Cyril, [he] laid low the impious Nestorius, who was blaspheming against the Son of God and the holy Theotokos, through a dogmatic letter full of orthodoxy, and cast him out of the orthodox church. Through other teachings, he also freed the other churches of the east from this filth, and having enlightened many, completed his days in peace... [PG 117: 391-2]

The Era of Sixtus III

St. Celestine's successor, Sixtus III [432-440], was concerned that controversies about St. Cyril's anathematisms might cause a rupture with Antioch. Writing to Cyril in 432, Sixtus pointed out that what Pope Celestine had written, and what the Apostolic See had defined, was sufficient to defend the faith; if John of Antioch accepted these letters, he was Catholic. Sixtus exhorted Cyril to bear all injuries with a generous spirit, and inform neighboring bishops about this letter, so that all might see that the Apostolic See was not slackening, and that "the solicitude for all the churches allows us no rest from such cares." [PL 50: 583-7]

In another letter, the pope noted regarding the followers of John of Antioch, "we already defined that this was to be observed, that if they repented, and with their leader rejected whatever the holy synod, with our confirmation, rejected, they would take their places again among the bishops." [PL 50: 589]

After lengthy negotiations, Cyril of Alexandria and John of Antioch signed a formula of union in 433; John announced that he had accepted the decrees of Ephesus in letters to the bishops of Rome, Alexandria and Constantinople. [PL 50: 592-4]

The clergy of Antioch brought a letter from their bishop to Pope Sixtus. The recently rediscovered letter begins:

To my most pious and holy master [and] colleague Sixtus— John, health in the Lord. We have learned that, to the advantage of the world, Your Holiness has been raised to the apostolic throne. The Churches of Christ throughout the world will have a light which will enlighten not only the west, but the very ends of the world... [Schwartz, *Neue Aktenstuke zum ephesinischen Konzil von 431*, Munich 1920, 71]

Delighted at the reconciliation, Pope Sixtus replied:

You have learned, by the outcome of the present business, what it is to agree in sentiment with us. The blessed apostle Peter, in his successors, has handed down what he has received. Who would want to separate himself from the doctrine of him whom the Master Himself declared to be first among the apostles? [PL 50: 609]

Cyril too continued in communion with the Rome; a discourse included among his works calls Celestine “archbishop of the entire habitable world.” [PG 77: 1040]

A Bizarre Appeal: Eutherius and Helladius

Not everybody was pleased with the reconciliation between Antioch and Alexandria. A letter addressed to “Sixtus, bishop of Great Rome,” came from two bishops, Eutherius of Tyana and Helladius of Tarsus, purporting to represent many eastern bishops who felt that Nestorius had been bullied by Cyril, the “Egyptian.” They asked Sixtus to investigate what had happened in the east, and annul the measures against Nestorius. Although nothing could have been farther from the pope’s intentions, Eutherius and Helladius wrote:

Christ the Lord, who has showed great providence for the human race in every age, in former times prepared other luminaries to lead people of good will and confound their opponents, to destroy lies and confirm the truth. Just as under Pharaoh he raised up blessed Moses against Jannes and Mambres, and set Peter the victorious over Simon the Magician, so also against those enemies who have arisen in our time He has raised up Your Holiness, through whom we have good hope that the world may be delivered from Egyptian error. *As a New Moses, you will indeed strike every Egyptian heretic, but save every orthodox Israelite.* Therefore, with so many thousands of measures taken against the truth, and the purest pearl of orthodoxy exposed to unprecedented opposition by those who have invented these novelties of speech against the apostolic faith of the fathers, it is our part, assailed as we are by three-dimensional manifold storms, and who have practically fallen prey to pirates, *to cry out to him whom God has given as a pilot, and, for the love of truth, to inform him as far as possible.* In your grace and wisdom, you will not spurn or lightly ignore such a matter, but examine it with the love of a good work, and impose a correction with all due constancy, and the bold assurance God loves.

And indeed from of old, when the weeds of heresy were arising in Alexandria, your apostolic see sufficed throughout that entire time to refute lies, check impiety, correct whatever was necessary and strengthen the world for Christ's glory, *both under that thrice blessed Bishop Damasus, who must be considered to be among the saints, and under many other glorious and admirable bishops.* Wherefore we too make bold to offer these supplications, so that you might assist the world, both in the part which is in error and in the part that is suffering tyranny, and faces an assault designed to make it agree to unacceptable doctrines...

We beseech you therefore, and throw ourselves at

the feet of Your Holiness so that you might stretch out a saving hand and stop the shipwreck of the world, *and order an investigation to be conducted into all these things, and correction to be applied to these unlawful deeds*, so that the holy shepherds unjustly driven from their flocks may be called back, and ancient concord be restored to the flocks.

We, who have partly seen these things and partly heard of them, would long ago have hastened to Your Holiness— we who come from different regions, that is, from the Euphrates, from both Cilicias, from Second Cappadocia, Bithynia, Thessalia and Moesia... had we not been detained by the fear of wolves laying snares for the flock... We beseech you therefore to arise without delay, and with burning zeal raise up the trophy of victory against the hosts of enemies, having before your eyes the diligence of the Good Shepherd and, at the same time, care for the wandering sheep. Imitate that great herald of the faith, Paul, eye of the world, in whom we believe that we have an intimate pledge of union with Your Holiness. For he was our fellow countryman, who having destroyed error throughout the world became the ornament of your apostolic see, and received the right hand of fellowship from Blessed Peter, so that both clearly might be seen to guard the subtlety of doctrine... [Mansi 5: 893-7]

The Decree About the Creed

In the sixth session, the Council of Ephesus heard from the priest Charisius, of the church of Philadelphia. According to Charisius, certain heretics in his diocese had recently converted, and were visited by a priest from Constantinople named James, a supporter of Nestorius. Instead of making the converts sign the Creed of Nicea, James gave them another Creed, which reflected the ideas of Nestorius. Charisius, who had objected to this bit of knavery, was promptly excommunicated himself. [Mansi 4: 1345-8]

Appealing to the ecumenical council, Charisius read his own profession of faith—essentially the Nicene Creed with slight variations in wording. The heretical creed used by the priest James was also read. In response to the report from Charisius, the bishops decreed, “...it is not allowed to anybody to present, to write or to compose a faith other [*heteran*] than the one decreed by the holy fathers who met at Nicea, together with the Holy Spirit...” [Mansi 4: 1361]

From the very beginning the meaning of this ordinance has been disputed: as early as 433, when Cyril of Alexandria and John of Antioch signed the Formula of Union, they were criticized for violating this decree of Ephesus. Cyril even mentioned the accusation in a letter to Acacius, bishop of Melitene, pointing out that by signing the Formula of Union, the “Orientals” were not innovating but rather proving their orthodoxy. [Mansi 5: 316]

In 448 the heretic Eutyches, citing this decree of the ecumenical council of Ephesus, claimed that it forbade the Church from defining that there were two natures in Christ. In a similar spirit the monophysites, led by Dioscorus of Alexandria, appealed to this decision of Ephesus in order to reject the Tome of Pope Leo and the decree of the ecumenical council of Chalcedon.

On the other hand, Patriarch Eulogius of Alexandria in the sixth century, and Maximus the Confessor in the seventh, explained that the Council of Ephesus did not prohibit doctrinal definitions in harmony with the Nicene faith. [PG 91: 257-60. PG 103: 1049]

To meet challenges to her faith by new and more precise definitions is an inalienable right of the Catholic Church.

Note on Sources

Certain passages from the Acts of Ephesus have been double sourced. The old version, with parallel columns in Latin and Greek, appears in Mansi, Vol. IV. A modern critical edition, based on the primary manuscript

Keys Over the Christian World

collections, appears in E. Schwartz, *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum* [ACO]. Particularly valuable is the *Collectio Vaticana*, in ACO Tome I, Vol. 1, Pt. 3, abbreviated as ACO I: 1: 3: [pg.]

Chapter X

Outrage at Ephesus

Early in 449, Pope Leo I [440–461] received a letter from Emperor Theodosius II. It contained an appeal from a monastic superior, Eutyches, who had been condemned in a synod by Flavian, bishop of Constantinople. Leo had heard from Eutyches the previous year. Eutyches had warned of a revival of Nestorianism, and Leo in turn had congratulated him for his zeal. [Ep. 20. PL 54: 713]

Eutyches had become involved in fresh theological controversy at Constantinople. While opposing the Nestorian heresy, which held that there were two *hypostases* (subsistencies) in Christ, Eutyches had denied that there were two *natures* in Christ. Eusebius, bishop of Dorylaeum, who had excellent anti-Nestorian credentials— he had publicly denounced Nestorius while still a layman— had tried to reason with Eutyches, but to no avail. Two decades after the outbreak of the Nestorian controversy, Eusebius had the distinction of exposing *another* major heresy. He denounced Eutyches at the Council of Constantinople in 448. Unwilling to confess the two natures, Eutyches had been condemned.

Pope Leo read the appeal. Eutyches claimed that he had been summoned to a council by Flavian, and required to confess *two natures* in Christ. Maintaining that the Council of Nicea had used no such expression, Eutyches had refused and was promptly condemned. Noting that he had already appealed to the bishops of Alexandria and Constantinople and their synods, Eutyches wrote:

...I asked that these things be made known to Your Holiness, and that you judge what seemed right to you, professing that in all respects I would follow what you should approve. [Inter epp. S. Leonis, 21. PL 54: 716]

Claiming to be the victim of intrigue and even hatred on the part of Eusebius of Dorylaeum, his chief accuser, Eutyches had added:

So I have recourse to you, defender of religion and enemy of cabals... and I ask you to ignore what has been done to me through intrigue, and to pronounce on the faith as you see fit. Do not permit intriguers to come after me with their calumnies; do not allow him who has lived seventy years in continence and chastity to be excluded from the ranks of Catholics. [PL 54: 717]

Pope Leo had heard from Theodosius and from Eutyches, but not from Bishop Flavian of Constantinople. On February 18, 449, Pope Leo replied to Theodosius, praising the emperor's zeal for the faith, but adding: "I could not yet recognize what moved my brother and fellow bishop Flavian to deprive the priest Eutyches of communion, although that priest sent a *libellus* of complaint to the Apostolic See..." As for the accusation submitted by Eusebius of Dorylaeum, Pope Leo did not think that it contained clear and convincing evidence of Eutyches' guilt. Noting that Flavian should have informed him of these matters from the beginning, Leo called for more complete information, so as to be able to render a just judgment. [Ep. 24. PL 54: 735-6]

Pope Leo to Flavian:

"We want to know the reason for your action..."

On the same day, Leo also wrote to Flavian of Constantinople. Still uncertain about the justice of excommunicating Eutyches, Leo called for a complete report:

We want to know the reason for your action, and that everything be brought to our knowledge, because we, who want the judgments of the Lord's bishops to be mature, cannot define anything prejudicial to either party without knowledge of these matters until we hear accurate information about everything... And therefore let Your Fraternity send us a most complete report, through a suitable and especially apt person,

about the novelty that may have emerged against the ancient faith, which deserved to be punished by so severe a sentence... And therefore, because Your Charity sees that we are necessarily solicitous about so important a case, hasten to indicate to all the information, as fully and clearly as possible, as should have been done already...[Ep. 23. PL 54: 731-3]

In fact Flavian *had* sent a report, but it had not yet reached Rome. Branding Eutyches as a wolf in sheep's clothing, Flavian's letter had noted that the aging monk had refused to confess two natures in Christ *after* the incarnation. Eutyches also had denied that the flesh of Christ was consubstantial with ours—that is, of the same nature as ours. Flavian had had no choice but to excommunicate Eutyches, and asked Leo to inform the western bishops of this sentence. [*Inter epp. S. Leonis*, 22. PL 54: 724-8]

Once he received Leo's letter, Flavian wrote a second letter to Rome, reaffirming the justice of the actions against Eutyches, who affirmed two natures *before* the incarnation of the Savior, but *after* the union confessed only one; Eutyches had also denied that the flesh of Christ was consubstantial with our own. As for the letters Eutyches had sent to Rome, Flavian denounced them as full of deceit, and asked Leo to subscribe to the condemnation of Eutyches as canonical and just. The matter only needed Leo's action and assistance, Flavian continued, and the disturbance would calm down, and a future council, which was now being announced, would be stymied. [*Inter epp. S. Leonis*, 26. PL 54: 744-8]

Pope Leo replied to Flavian, acknowledging that Eutyches had departed from the truth. Leo promised Flavian a full pronouncement in another letter, "so that we may instruct Your Fraternity about what must be laid down concerning the entire case." [Ep. 27. PL 54: 751-2]

The Tome to Flavian

Pope Leo's next letter to Flavian is one of the most famous ever written by a pope. Conceding that Eutyches had erred through imprudence and incompetence, Leo proposed to refute his heresy by reiterating certain

phrases of the Creed. Noting that Eutyches, an old man, had not yet grasped a prayer “pronounced throughout the world by the voice of the newly reborn,” Leo drew attention to three lines which, he declared, refute the machinations of practically every heretic:

I believe in God, the Father Almighty...
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord...
who was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary...
[Ep. 28. PL 54: 757]

These lines, Leo continued, present to us God, the Almighty Father, and His coeternal Son, God of God, of the same power and glory and essence as the Father. The Son also had a temporal birth, from the Virgin, to carry out the redemption of man; the letter illustrated this temporal birth with a wealth of passages from the Old and New Testaments. In the one person of the Redeemer, the letter continued, there are two complete natures, the divinity and the humanity, each with its own properties:

For each form [nature] does what is proper to itself, with the communion of the other— the Word working what is of the Word, and the flesh performing what is of the flesh. One of them shines brightly with miracles; the other succumbs to injuries... [PL 54: 767]

The text continues with scriptural proofs of the reality of the flesh of Christ. Eutyches, the pope continued, had been justly condemned, but could receive mercy if repentant. The pope announced that he was sending legates into the east— a bishop Julian, the priest Renatus, the deacon Hilary and a notary, Dulcitius— to take his place in an upcoming ecumenical council. [PL 54: 767 sq.]

St. Peter Chrysologus: “Listen obediently... to the blessed pope”

Eutyches was still busy pursuing appeals. One of them was to Peter, archbishop of Ravenna, who came to be called *Chrysologus*, Greek for “golden discourse,” in recognition of his brilliant preaching. The see of

Ravenna, Chrysologus seems to intimate, had begun to exercise metropolitan rights “by a decree of Blessed Peter, [and] by a decree of a Christian prince.” [Sermon 175. PL 52: 676]

Declining to hear the appeal, Chrysologus offered Eutyches this advice:

We exhort you, honorable brother, to listen obediently to what has been written by the blessed pope of the city of Rome, *since Blessed Peter, who lives and presides in his own see, grants the truth of faith to those who seek it.* For we, in our zeal for peace and faith, cannot hear cases about faith without the consent of the bishop of Rome. [*Inter epp. S. Leonis*, 25. PL 54: 743]

Eutyches didn't need the help of Peter Chrysologus: thanks to his godson Chrysaphius, the aging monk had connections at court. Eutyches had asked for an ecumenical council. In March 449, Theodosius seconded that wish. He ordered Dioscorus, bishop of Alexandria, to be at Ephesus for the council by August 1, along with ten metropolitans and ten other bishops from Egypt. [Mansi 6: 588-9]

Pope Leo had been in contact with Dioscorus in the past. Early in his pontificate, Leo had written to him, urging that the Alexandrian Church follow Roman custom by performing ordinations on Sunday or at least the vigil of Sunday. The Christian east also had a tradition that the Divine Liturgy, or eucharistic sacrifice, should only be offered once a day on the same altar. On feast days where many people were present, however, Leo had pointed out that this rule should be relaxed, and the Liturgy should be repeated so that everyone could participate:

...since the most blessed Peter received from the Lord the apostolic principality, and the Roman Church continues in his institutions, it is impious to believe that his holy disciple Mark, who first governed the Alexandrian Church, followed other rules in laying down her traditions. For undoubtedly

there was one mind of both the disciple and the master from the same fountain of grace... Nor can we allow any discrepancy between us, inasmuch as we are of one body and one faith, or that the disciple and his teacher have different institutions... [Ep. 9. PL 54: 624-7]

In May 449, Pope Leo received an invitation to the council. Replying to Theodosius on June 13, Leo confirmed that Eutyches was in error, but could be forgiven through repentance; after all, Eutyches “promised that he would correct whatever our sentence disapproved concerning his badly conceived opinions.” As for “what the Catholic Church universally believes and teaches about the mystery of the Incarnation of the Lord,” Leo continued, that was contained more fully in the letter to Flavian. [Ep. 29. PL 54: 781-3]

The pope also wrote to Empress Pulcheria, condemning the errors of both Nestorius and Eutyches. Unable to leave the Apostolic See due to political conditions and past precedent, Leo repeated that legates would take his place at the council. Leo still believed that Eutyches had erred through ignorance and lack of expertise. [Ep. 29, 30. PL 54: 785 sq.]

The pope wrote to the archimandrites of Constantinople, hoping that Eutyches would come to his senses and be restored. The doctrine of the incarnation had been explained in the letter to Flavian; there, the pope continued, “you may learn what we want to be fixed in the hearts of the faithful.” [PL 54: 795-7]

The same group of letters, dated June 13, contains directions Leo had intended to send to the ecumenical council. Noting that Theodosius had intended to combine the Apostolic See’s authority with a holy intention to bring about the council, Leo reasoned that Theodosius, so to speak, wanted a declaration from the most blessed apostle Peter himself about the confession of faith: “*Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God...*” This confession, Leo declared, confirmed the true divinity and humanity of Christ, respecting the properties of each nature. Because the court had called for a council of bishops “so that the whole error might be abolished by a fuller judgment,”

Leo announced that legates would represent him at the council. As for Eutyches, he could still be restored if he retracted his errors. [PL 54: 797-9]

The pope also wrote to Bishop Julian of Cos, to Flavian, and to Theodosius. Leo reiterated his condemnation of the new heresy, his desire that Eutyches be forgiven in case of repentance, and announced that the letter to Flavian had been written “so that the Universal Church may learn what we hold as divinely handed down concerning the ancient and unique faith...and what we are to preach unalterably.” [Epp. 34-38. PL 54: 801-13]

At Ephesus, the Council Convenes

The council opened at Ephesus on August 8, 449, with Dioscorus of Alexandria presiding by imperial instructions. Also present were Bishop Julius of Pozzuoli, leader of the Roman legates, and the bishops of Jerusalem, Antioch and Constantinople. About 130 bishops were present. [Mansi 6: 600, 605-10]

The session opened with a reading of documents, beginning with the emperor’s letters concerning the council. After the first letter was read, the Roman legates asked that the pope’s letter be read. Although Dioscorus agreed to have Leo’s letter read, the notary continued to read imperial letters instead. [Mansi 6: 613-16]

When the bishops listened to the acts of the condemnation of Eutyches, there were exclamations such as, “Take Eusebius [of Dorylaeum and] burn him! Let him burn alive! Let him be torn in two! As he divided [Christ], let him be divided.” Dioscorus asked, “Is this language tolerable to you—to speak of two natures after the incarnation?” The synod answered, “Anathema to him who so speaks.” [Mansi 7: 737]

Bishop after bishop, ending with Dioscorus, declared that Eutyches ought to be rehabilitated. [Mansi 7: 833 sq.]

Dioscorus had another surprise in store. Claiming that the Fathers of Ephesus had forbidden, under pain of deposition, the introduction of any

faith besides that of Nicea, he proposed that Eutyches' chief accusers—Flavian of Constantinople and Eusebius of Dorylaeum—be deposed for having violated this decree with their formula of two natures in Christ. [Mansi 7: 908]

Flavian had heard enough. "I appeal from you," he told Dioscorus. The deacon Hilary, a Roman legate, also added a protest: *contradicitur*, or "it is negated!" in Latin. The passive voice was an apt metaphor for the helplessness of the legates. In spite of their protests, however, the rest of the bishops accepted the condemnation of Flavian and Eusebius. [Mansi 7: 908 sq.]

A Bishop Martyred

While Hilary the deacon escaped and managed to make his way back to Rome, both Flavian and Eusebius were thrown into prison, and sent into exile. Although Eusebius was able to escape, Flavian never made it out alive; eventually the church would learn that Flavian had died as a result of the ill-treatment. Pope Leo wrote to Flavian on August 11, 449. Disturbed that he had not heard from him, Leo expressed brotherly esteem, asking that Flavian reply with all speed. The letter was never answered. [Ep. 39. PL 54: 813–14]

After their deposition at Ephesus, Flavian and Eusebius had appealed to Rome. The texts of their appeals were rediscovered in 1882 and published by Dom Amelli, who found a Latin version of the appeal in the archives of Novara, and by Mommsen. [*Neues Archiv*, Hanover 1886, 11: 362 sq.]

Flavian informed the pope that Dioscorus would not let Leo's tome be read, "although it is sufficient for the confirmation of the faith of the Fathers." Flavian added that "when I appealed to the apostolic throne of the prince of the apostles, and to the entire blessed synod which is under Your Holiness," a multitude of soldiers had surrounded him and prevented him from taking refuge at the altar. After describing the violence and other untoward scenes at the robber council, Flavian had urged Pope Leo:

...to issue a decree which God will inform your mind to frame, so that, with a Council of both east and west being held, a like faith may be preached everywhere so that the statutes of the fathers may prevail, so that whatever has been done may be rendered null and void... [Neues Archiv 11: 363-4]

In his own appeal, Eusebius of Dorylaeum wrote:

The apostolic throne has been accustomed from the beginning to defend those who are suffering injustice... You have a right understanding, and preserve the faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ unshaken, and show unfeigned charity to all the brethren, and all who call upon the name of Christ... *I implore Your Beatitude... restore to me the dignity of my episcopate, and communion with you, by letters from you to my lowliness bestowing on me my rank and communion.* [Neues Archiv 11: 364-7]

Theodoret, bishop of Cyrus, also forwarded an appeal, writing to Pope Leo:

If Paul, herald of the truth, trumpet of the Holy Spirit, had recourse to Peter to answer the doubts of the Christians of Antioch about the observance of the law, with far greater reason do we lowly and little ones have recourse to your apostolic throne to receive from you the remedy for the wounds of the churches. *To you, indeed, it is fitting that the primacy belong in every respect.* Your see is adorned with numerous superiorities. Other cities boast of their grandeur, their beauty and the number of their inhabitants; some cities, lacking these advantages, are adorned with certain spiritual privileges. Yours has received from God an affluence of goods: it is the greatest and most illustrious, it presides over the universe, it is teeming with inhabitants. Yet what adorns it far more is its faith, to which the divine apostle worthily

bears witness when he cries out: “Your faith is announced in the whole world.” If, immediately after having received the seeds of the salutary preaching it bore such wonderful fruit, what discourse could fittingly celebrate the piety that reigns there today? It also possesses the tombs of the common fathers and teachers of the truth, Peter and Paul, who enlighten the souls of the faithful. This divine and thrice blessed pair arose in the east, and everywhere projected its rays, but they chose the west for the end of their lives, and from there they now enlighten the universe. [PG 83: 1313]

After describing his grievances about the robber council, Theodoret continued:

I have been a bishop for twenty-six years, without ever having received any reproach... I have led into the Church over a thousand Marcionites, and many Arians and Eunomians. Not a heretic remains in the eight hundred parishes that I govern. God knows how many times I have been pelted with stones, and what struggles I sustained in many cities of the east against pagans, Jews and all sorts of heretics. And after so much sweat and fatigue, I have been condemned without having been judged. *But I await the sentence of your apostolic see; I beg and urge your holiness, to whose just tribunal I appeal to help me, to order me to go and give an account of my doctrine* and to show that it is in conformity with that of the apostles... But before anything else, I implore you to tell me whether or not I must accept this unjust deposition, because I await your sentence. If you tell me to accept the judgment that was made, I shall do so and shall no longer bother anybody, but rather await the just judgment of God our Savior. [PG 83: 1313-16]

Theodoret also contacted the priest Renatus, a legate of Pope Leo. Unaware that Renatus was dead, Theodoret wrote:

I implore your holiness to convince the most holy archbishop to use his apostolic authority to order me to come to his synod, because this most holy see has authority (hegemonia) over the churches throughout the world for several reasons, the principal one being that it has never been infected with any heresy. It has never been occupied by an enemy of the true faith, but has preserved the apostolic grace intact. Whatever you decide, we will acquiesce in it, convinced of your equity. We ask to be judged according to our writings, because we have composed over thirty books. [PG 83: 1324]

A Protest from Pope Leo

Weeks passed before Pope Leo found out what had happened, but by October at the latest, Hilary the deacon managed to return to Rome, where he informed Leo of the enormities committed at Ephesus. An outraged Pope Leo wrote to the eastern emperor shortly before October 13, 449. The [Second] Council of Ephesus had harmed the faith and wounded all the churches, Leo noted bluntly. He urged the emperor by the Holy Trinity, “which is the keeper of your empire,” and by Christ’s holy angels, to restore matters to their status before the council. “All the churches of our regions,” Leo declared, “and all the bishops tearfully request, because of the appeal contained in the *libellus* of Flavian, that you command a special council to be held in parts of Italy,” which could be attended by bishops of all the eastern provinces; this council could settle the conflict, reconcile bishops who had strayed at Ephesus, or at least cut off incorrigible bishops from the Church. Such a council, the pope added, must observe “the canon of Nicea,” a “constitution of the bishops of the entire world”—a likely reference to the canons of Sardica; the Romans frequently referred to the Sardican canons as canons of Nicea. [Ep. 43. PL 54: 821–3]

On October 13, Pope Leo and the synod of Rome formally requested a new council in Italy. The synod’s letter is essentially the same as Leo’s last letter, including the reference to the canons of Nicea or Sardica, “which were established for the bishops of the whole world.” [Ep. 44. PL 54: 827–32]

Keys Over the Christian World

Pope Leo wrote to Empress Pulcheria that the acts of the recent council at Ephesus had been obtained by violence, and were completely against the discipline of the canons, and thus invalid. The council had not even been allowed to listen to the exposition of the faith which the legates had brought “from the See of the blessed apostle Peter.” Noting that Flavian had persisted “in communion with all of us,” Leo repeated his request for a new council in Italy. [Ep. 45. PL 54: 833-6]

Pulcheria also heard from the deacon Hilary, who explained what had happened at Ephesus. Given the outcome, Hilary wrote, the pope and the entire council of the west condemned what had happened at Ephesus. [PL 54: 837-9]

Pope Leo also wrote to Anastasius, papal vicar at Thessalonica, who had been unable to come to the council. Seeing the hand of God in this circumstance, he congratulated Anastasius for his absence at Ephesus, adding that those who attack the ancient foundations of the Catholic faith “most definitely” would not remain in Rome’s communion. [Ep. 47. PL 54: 839-40]

Pope Leo wrote as well to Bishop Julian of Cos, urging him to adhere to the traditional faith. Another letter of condolence was addressed to Flavian. Still unaware that Flavian was dead, Leo wrote to the clergy, faithful and archimandrites at Constantinople. [Epp. 48-50] Condemning the Second Council of Ephesus, he consoled the faithful, urging them to imitate their bishop, Flavian, and added:

As long as your bishop Flavian is alive and well [sic], whoever dares to invade his priesthood shall never be considered in our communion, nor shall he be able to be counted among the bishops. For just as we anathematized Nestorius in his perversity, so also, by a similar execration, do we condemn those who deny the reality of our flesh in our Lord Jesus Christ. [PL 54: 845]

In late 449, however, Leo learned that a new bishop *had* been chosen

at Constantinople: Anatolius, former secretary of Dioscorus, who announced his ordination to Leo. [*Inter epp. S. Leonis*, 53. PL 54: 854–6]

The pope tried one more time to contact Theodosius II, emperor of the east. Professing firm adherence to the faith of Nicea, and condemning the heresies of Nestorius and Eutyches, Leo asked for a council in Italy, which with God's help would liquidate the recent scandals that had disturbed the entire Church. Such a council, Leo reminded Theodosius, would preserve the integrity of the Catholic faith, keep the Christian peace, and even increase the emperor's glory. [Ep. 54. PL 54: 855–6]

Arrival of the Western Rulers

In early 450 Valentinian, emperor of the west, paid a visit to Rome from Ravenna, along with his wife Eudoxia and his mother, Galla Placidia. The imperial family arrived on February 22, feast of the Chair of Peter. Pope Leo implored the sovereigns to convince their relative, Theodosius, to refer the case of Flavian to Rome, with a council to be held in Italy. Valentinian obliged, urging Theodosius by letter,

...to preserve intact the dignity of the veneration [due] in our time as well to the blessed apostle Peter, *so that the most blessed bishop of Rome, to whom antiquity conferred the principality of the priesthood over all, have the faculty of judging with regard to the faith and the bishops...* [*Inter epp. S. Leonis*, 55. PL 54: 859]

Galla Placidia wrote to Theodosius, reminding him that the trouble was due to one man, Dioscorus, who had pursued Flavian with soldiers and terrorized him:

...because he had sent a *libellus* to the Apostolic See, and to all the bishops of these parts, through those who had been directed in the council by the most reverend bishop of Rome, who are supposed to be present according to the definitions of the Council of Nicea [Sardica?].... Let Your Clemency command the truth of the faith of the Catholic

religion to be preserved unblemished, so that according to the decree and definition of the Apostolic See, which we also venerate as excelling... [and] with Flavian remaining unharmed in his priesthood in every respect, [his case] may be transferred to the judgment of the council and the Apostolic See, *in which he who was worthy first to receive the heavenly keys ordained the principality of the episcopate*, as it behooves us in all respects to preserve reverence for this greatest of cities, which is the mistress of all lands. [*Inter epp. S. Leonis*, 56. PL 54: 859-62]

Galla Placidia also wrote to Pulcheria, the future empress, urging matters to be referred to the Apostolic See, “where Peter, first of the apostles who also received the keys of the heavenly kingdoms, held the principality of the priesthood.” [*Inter epp. S. Leonis*, 58. PL 54: 865]

In March 450, the pope wrote to the clergy and faithful of Constantinople. Deploring the proceedings at Ephesus, he congratulated the faithful for persevering in the truth. Leo assured the faithful of his paternal care, and asked them to obtain from the emperor the convocation of a “plenary synod,” to restore order in the churches. Leo wrote in a similar vein to Empress Pulcheria. [Epp. 59-60. PL 54: 865-74]

Pope Leo also wrote to Archimandrites Martin and Faustus, who had actively worked for orthodoxy at Constantinople. Leo was not entirely certain whether they had received his earlier letters, “which were sent, not only by the authority of the Apostolic See, but also by the unanimity of the holy synod which had frequently met with us, so that in them it might be clear what care we have for the entire Church.” Urging the monastic priests to continue fighting against the new heresy, Leo added:

I am mindful that I preside over the Church in the name of him whose confession was glorified by the Lord Jesus Christ, and whose faith indeed destroys all heresies [and] especially fights against the impiety of the present error, and I understand that I have no choice other than to expend all

my efforts on that case, in which the salvation of the Universal Church is under attack. [Ep. 61. PL 54: 874–6]

The pope's campaign, however, did not enjoy the eastern emperor's support. Letters from Theodosius II revealed that he saw nothing wrong with what had happened at Ephesus, believed that Flavian had been justly condemned, and thought that the recent council's decisions must stand. [*Inter epp. S. Leonis*, 62–64. PL 54: 875–9]

Turning to the west, the pope directed Ravennius, bishop of Arles, to publish the Tome to Flavian to all the bishops of Gaul. Three bishops—Ceretius, Salonius and Veranus—addressing Leo as “holy master, most blessed father, Pope most worthy of the Apostolic See”—asked him to check the accuracy of their copy. They informed Leo that his Tome was being acclaimed throughout the churches, “so that the truly common opinion of all declared that with reason had the principality of the Apostolic See been established there, where the oracles of the apostle's mouth were revealed.” [Epp. 67–68. PL 54: 886–7]

On July 16, 450 the pope wrote to Theodosius; Leo was willing to accept Anatolius as bishop of Constantinople *only if* Anatolius made a clearly orthodox profession of faith. Leo wanted Anatolius to sign St. Cyril's second letter to Nestorius, and Leo's own letter to Flavian. To regularize the situation of Anatolius, Leo was sending legates into the east. Leo reiterated his request for an ecumenical council in Italy; in Leo's view, this was the proper remedy for the recent scandals. He wrote in the same sense to Pulcheria. [Epp. 69–70. PL 54: 890–95]

An Opportunity for Orthodoxy

In late July 450, Theodosius II died of an accident on his horse. Imperial authority was quickly assumed by his sister, Pulcheria. When Pulcheria married a senator named Marcian, he was proclaimed emperor by the senate and the army. Marcian announced his accession to the throne in a letter to Pope Leo. The brief missive expressed concern for the Catholic religion, “by assistance of which we trust that the strength of our authority

is governed,” and added:

In the first place, we thought it just to address Your Holiness, *who exercises oversight and rule with regard to the divine faith*, by sacred letters: inviting and requesting Your Holiness to pray to the Eternal Divinity for the firmness and state of our empire... so that, with every impious error removed through the synod to be celebrated *by your authority*, the utmost peace may obtain among all the bishops of the Catholic faith... [*Inter epp. S. Leonis*, 73. PL 54: 899–900]

This letter exists in both a Latin and a Greek version. The translation follows the Greek, which presents Leo as exercising oversight [*episkopeusan*] and rule [*arxousan*] with regard to the divine faith, while the Latin version attributes to Pope Leo the “*principality in the Episcopate of the divine faith*.” [PL 54: 899–900]

In November 450 Marcian wrote again to Pope Leo, inviting him to come to the east to celebrate a synod. If Leo, for whatever reason, could not come, Marcian offered to send letters to the bishops throughout the east, directing them to come to some definite location for the council. Marcian assured Leo that the council would be “as Your Holiness has decreed, in accordance with ecclesiastical rules.” [PL 54: 903–06]

Empress Pulcheria also wrote to Leo, announcing that Anatolius had signed the “Tome” to Flavian. The body of the martyred Flavian, added Pulcheria, had been returned to Constantinople and given honorable burial, and bishops exiled for the faith had returned. The council, according to Pulcheria, would follow Leo’s directions—“by your authority,” she wrote, as Marcian had written earlier. [PL 54: 905–07]

Preparations for a New Council

Leo thanked Marcian and Pulcheria in letters of April 451. As for bishops who had participated in the misdeeds at Ephesus, Leo wrote, peace could be granted them if they subscribed to a satisfactory profession of faith. [PL 54: 907–12]

Anatolius of Constantinople was in peace and communion with Rome. Pope Leo, who had approved his faith, wrote to Anatolius announcing the news, but warned him not to recite the names of condemned men at the altar. He called on Anatolius to obey the instructions of the Roman legates at Constantinople and directed Anatolius to adhere to bishops such as Julian of Cos, who had adhered to Flavian. Noting that Eusebius of Dorylaeum, who had suffered much for the faith, was at Rome, Leo directed Anatolius to take care of that bishop's church. Leo wanted this letter to become common knowledge, so that everybody could congratulate Anatolius about the peace he enjoyed with the Apostolic See. [PL 54: 913-16]

Leo also wrote to Bishop Julian of Cos, who had suffered persecution from the faction of Dioscorus. Repeating that fallen bishops might be restored *if* they condemned their errors and the men responsible for them, Pope Leo added that after Easter, legates would come from Rome to sort these matters out. [PL 54: 915-17]

In another letter to Marcian, Pope Leo pointed out that it is illicit to think about the divine Scriptures differently from what the apostles and fathers taught; the purpose of the upcoming council was not so much to debate about the faith as to determine the best way to reconcile bishops who had fallen. On this point, Leo announced that his legates would have more complete instructions. In June 451, Leo wrote to Marcian again, declaring that it was not yet the right time for the council, but that his legates—the bishop Lucentius and the priest Basil—would undertake the task of reconciling fallen bishops. [PL 54: 917-920]

The Work of Reconciling the Bishops

Pope Leo expressed himself similarly in another letter to Pulcheria, asking her to help his legates carry out the work of reconciliation. He asked Pulcheria to have Eutyches exiled to some more distant place, and to have a Catholic abbot put in charge of Eutyches' monastery. [PL 54: 921-2]

Leo gave further instructions about reconciliation of the bishops to

Anatolius of Constantinople. Bishops who had fallen through fear could be pardoned, as long as they condemned heresy in no uncertain terms. Cases of bishops who had committed more serious offenses were to be reserved “to the more mature counsels of the Apostolic See.” Cases requiring further deliberation should also be quickly reported to Rome, “so that our solicitude may establish what ought to be observed.” [PL 54: 922-4]

Leo’s next letter to Anatolius, in June 451, concerned two priests of the eastern church, Basil and John. Apparently the priests had been accused of heresy, and had made the long trip to Rome. There they had revealed their faith from the heart, condemning both the Nestorian and Eutychian heresies. Noting that the two priests believed “no differently than what we, through the Holy Spirit’s instruction, have both learned and taught,” and therefore enjoyed the grace of apostolic communion, Pope Leo asked Anatolius to receive them favorably. [PL 54: 926]

At Constantinople, Marcian Announces a Council

Pope Leo did not believe that the right time had come for the council, and had urged Marcian to postpone it for a more opportune time. It was too late: in May, Marcian had already sent letters to the metropolitans. Noting that doubts about the faith had arisen, “as the letter of Leo, bishop of glorious Rome, beloved of God, indicates,” the emperor had directed the metropolitans to come to a council scheduled to open at Nicea on September 1, 451. [Mansi 6: 551-4]

The pope replied to Marcian on June 24. Although Leo had not wanted the council to be scheduled this soon, he acknowledged that Marcian had acted out of love for the Catholic faith. Pledging not to resist Marcian’s “devout judgment,” Leo announced that he was sending legates: Bishop Paschasinus of Lilybaeum and the priest Boniface, adding: “it is fitting that my aforementioned brother and fellow-bishop [Paschasinus] preside over the synod in my stead.” [PL 54: 930-31]

The pope also wrote to Paschasinus, announcing that he was sending the Tome to Flavian, “which the Universal Church also embraces,” urging

Paschasinus to become well versed in its teaching. The Tome, according to Leo, had been signed by the entire Church of Constantinople, its monasteries, and many bishops. Leo mentioned a report that the bishop of Antioch had persuaded bishops of that patriarchate to sign the Tome, and to condemn Nestorius and Eutyches. [PL 54: 927-9]

Followers of Eutyches, the pope declared, “think that they can deceive our diligence when they say that they believe in *one incarnate nature* of the Word.” In other words, the Eutychians were hanging their hats on St. Cyril’s old formula. Leo made it clear that this would not do: in the present controversy, the Tome to Flavian was the real standard of orthodoxy. [PL 54: 927]

On June 26, Leo wrote to Marcian again. Although he would have preferred a later date for the council, Leo wrote that he would “not resist” Marcian’s wishes. Leo’s main concern was that the Church’s faith, “which our blessed Fathers preached as handed down from the apostles,” not be called into question. [PL 54: 932-4]

The pope also wrote to Julian of Cos. Declaring that “we are necessarily enjoining on your fraternity what is profitable for the entire Church,” he directed Julian to act in concert with the Roman legates, “using the authority of our command.” [PL 54: 936]

Pope Leo’s Letter to the Council

After a year of pleas, preparations and negotiations, Leo was able to send a message to the Fathers of the council. Calling to mind the charity that ought to reign in the episcopal college, he spoke of the pardon to be granted to repentant bishops, and praised Marcian, who had “preserved the rights and honor of Blessed Peter” in planning for the council. Citing custom and necessity, Leo announced that he would not come to the council in person, but would be present in his legates:

...in these brethren, that is, Bishops Paschasinus and Lucentius,
and the priests Boniface and Basil, let Your Fraternity consider

me as presiding at the synod; my presence is not far from you inasmuch as I am present in my vicars. [Ep. 93. PL 54: 937]

The dogmatic question, the pope wrote, had been resolved by his letter to Flavian, which had elucidated the apostolic faith clearly and completely; the decrees of Ephesus must also particularly remain in force. The other great task of the council, the pope continued, was to restore bishops driven from their sees by heretics. [PL 54: 937–9]

The Events at Ephesus: “No Council, but a Robber Council”

Leo summarized his wishes again in letters to Marcian and Pulcheria dated July 20, 451. The Second Council of Ephesus, under Dioscorus, had been completely illegal, a concept Leo captured in seven Latin words: *in illo Ephesino non iudicio, sed latrocinio*. In other words, the council had been no true judgment but a den of thieves. Concurring with Leo’s assessment, history calls that synod the Robber Council of Ephesus.

Leo repeated that he would have preferred a council in Italy, but had agreed to send legates into the east, and had written letters to serve as a pattern for the work of adjudication. Given sufficient amendment, not only fallen bishops but even arch-heretics—“heresiarchs”—could be pardoned. [PL 54: 941–4]

In July or August, Leo received a letter from the metropolis of Milan. The bishops announced that the Tome to Flavian had been read and approved in the synod of Milan, informing Leo that, “following the form [decree] of your letters,” they had subscribed to the condemnation of Eutyches, which had been in force “by the earlier sentence of your authority.” [PL 54: 945–950]

Finally, the council that Pope Leo had sought was ready to begin.

Chapter XI

The Keys at Chalcedon

Originally the council had been scheduled to open at Nicea on September 1, but the venue was changed to Chalcedon, where the council opened on October 8, in the basilica of St. Euphemia. The imperial commissioners sat in the middle; on their left were the papal legates, the bishops of Constantinople, Antioch, Caesarea of Cappadocia, Ephesus, and other bishops. On the right were various other bishops, including Dioscorus, bishop of Alexandria. [ACO II, Vol. 3, Pt. 1, 39–40]

Because Dioscorus was seated as one of the judges, the Roman legate Paschasinus stood and made this announcement:

We have in our hands orders from the most blessed and apostolic pope of the city of Rome, which is head of all the churches, by which his apostleship has deigned to command that Dioscorus is not to sit in the council. It is necessary for us to observe this... Either he is to go out, or we leave. [ACO II, Vol. 3, Pt. 1, 40]

The commissioners wanted to know why Dioscorus was, in effect, singled out for accusation. The legate Lucentius replied:

It is necessary that he give an account for his judgment, because, although it was not his place to act as judge, he presumed and dared to make a synod without the authority of the Apostolic See, which was never lawful [and] was never done. [ACO II, Vol. 3, Pt. 1, 40]

Paschasinus added:

We cannot go against the commands of the most blessed and apostolic pope, governor of the Apostolic See, or against the ecclesiastical rules or the institutions of the fathers. [ACO II, Vol. 3, Pt. 1, 40]

The commissioners asked in what regard, specifically, Dioscorus had erred. Lucentius answered: “We do not suffer such an insult to be done either to you or to us, so that he, who came to be judged, should be seated.” [ACO II, Vol. 3, Pt. 1, 40]

At the bidding of the commissioners, Dioscorus took the place of the accused, and Eusebius of Dorylaeum stood in the midst as his accuser, and said: “I have been harmed by Dioscorus; the faith has been harmed. The holy bishop Flavian has been killed; I am filled with tears; he was unjustly condemned along with me.” [ACO II, Vol. 3, Pt. 1, 41]

Theodoret: “Leo... has restored his episcopate”

The commissioners had another announcement:

Let the most reverend bishop Theodoret also enter and participate in the synod, because the most holy archbishop Leo has restored his episcopate, and the most sacred and most pious emperor has ordered that he be present at the holy synod. [ACO II, Vol. 3, Pt. 1, 44]

The admission of Theodoret caused an uproar. A former accuser of St. Cyril of Alexandria and defender of Nestorius, Theodoret had been under a cloud with many of the Fathers. The Egyptians, Illyrians and Palestinian bishops exclaimed: “Have mercy, the faith perishes: the canons expel this man, throw him out; cast out the master of Nestorius.” [ACO II, Vol. 3, Pt. 1, 44]

Dioscorus asked, “Why is Cyril cast out, who was anathematized by this man?” On the other hand, the bishops of the “East,” and those of Pontus, Asia and Thrace cried: “Throw out Dioscorus, the homicide: who is

unaware of the actions of Dioscorus?” [ACO II, Vol. 3, Pt. 1, 44]

The judges interjected, “The most reverend bishop Theodoret, receiving his own place from the most holy bishop of the great city of Rome, has now entered in the place of an accuser.” However, they continued, this decision did not detract from the right of either side to lodge an accusation against the other. The judges also asked that the bishops refrain from any more outbursts. [ACO II, Vol. 3, Pt. 1, 44]

After a few more skirmishes, the acts of the Robber Council were read. That demonstrated that Leo’s letters had not been read at the council, although Dioscorus continued to justify his own behavior. [ACO II, Vol. 3, Pt. 1, 59]

Because Dioscorus was trying to put the martyred Flavian on trial, the bishops had to pass judgment on Flavian’s faith. When the judges asked the bishops whether or not Flavian had expounded the faith correctly, the papal legate Paschasius answered:

Flavian of blessed memory expounded [the faith] in a holy, complete and Catholic manner, for his exposition of the faith concurs with the letter of the apostolic man, the Pope of Rome. [ACO II, Vol. 3, Pt. 1, 94]

Anatolius of Constantinople also defended the late Flavian’s orthodoxy. Lucentius, another papal legate, added:

Because the faith of Flavian of holy memory concurs with the Apostolic See and the tradition of the Fathers, the sentence by which he was condemned by heretics ought to be turned back on those (who pronounced it). [ACO II, Vol. 3, Pt. 1, 94]

When these remarks were translated into Greek, Maximus, bishop of Antioch, said:

Archbishop Flavian of holy memory expounded the

faith in an orthodox manner, and in agreement with the most blessed and most holy Archbishop Leo... [ACO II, Vol. 3, Pt. 1, 94]

Other bishops defended the late Flavian, including Juvenal of Jerusalem, who declared that Flavian had been in agreement with Cyril. Juvenal then rose, switched sides, and went over to the orthodox. Other bishops imitated this gesture, including Peter of Corinth, who was ordained bishop after the Robber Council. Defenders of Flavian exclaimed: “*Peter savors the things that are of Peter. Welcome, orthodox one.*” Dioscorus, unimpressed, maintained that Flavian had been condemned for confessing “two natures after the union.” [ACO II, Vol. 3, Pt. 1, 95–7]

Towards the end of the first session, the imperial commissioners asked the bishops to explain, in writing, their opinion about the doctrine at issue. [ACO II, Vol. 3, Pt. 1, 259]

In the second session, October 10, when the commissioners reminded the Fathers of this request, Cecropius, bishop of Sebastopolis, said:

Regarding these matters, a decree [*typos*] has been given by the most holy archbishop of Rome, and we follow it, and all of us have subscribed to it... [ACO II, Vol. 1, Pt. 2, 78]

The bishops concurred, adding: “This is what we all say: what has been expounded suffices: it is not permissible that another exposition be made.” [ACO II, Vol. 1, Pt. 2, 78]

Florentius, bishop of Sardes, thought it unfitting that the bishops be rushed into making a definition of faith, and asked for more time, adding that he followed “the faith of the holy fathers, Cyril and Celestine, and the letter of the most holy Leo... we who have subscribed to the letter of the most holy Leo do not need correction.” [ACO II, Vol. 1, Pt. 2, 78–9]

At the suggestion of Cecropius of Sebastopolis, the Nicene Creed was read, followed by the Creed of Constantinople of 381, and two letters of Cyril of Alexandria: one to Nestorius, and another to John of Antioch, on the occasion of the reconciliation between the Egyptian and Antiochian churches. After Cyril's letter to John of Antioch was read, the bishops exclaimed:

We all so believe: pope Leo so believes: anathema to him who divides: this is the faith of Archbishop Leo: Leo so believes: Leo and Anatolius so believe: we all so believe: as Cyril believed, so do we believe: eternal memory to Cyril: as Cyril's letter has it, so do we think, so have we believed and so do we believe: Archbishop Leo so thinks, so believes, and so wrote. [ACO II, Vol. 1, Pt. 2, 81]

“Peter has spoken... through Leo”

After this letter, Leo's epistle to Flavian, the famous “Tome,” was read to the Fathers. The bishops exclaimed:

This is the faith of the fathers; this is the faith of the apostles. We all believe thus; the orthodox believe thus. Anathema to him who does not believe thus. *Peter has spoken these things through Leo*. The apostles taught thus. Leo taught piously and truly. Cyril taught thus. Leo and Cyril taught in like manner; anathema to him who does not believe thus. This is the true faith. We orthodox believe thus. This is the faith of the fathers. Why were these things not read at Ephesus? These things Dioscorus hid. [ACO II, Vol. 1, Pt. 2, 81]

When some bishops from Illyricum and Palestine expressed doubts about three passages, Aetius, archdeacon of Constantinople, explained that the passages expressed the same doctrine that Cyril of Alexandria had taught. The judges asked the bishops: “After all these things, who still doubts?” The bishops answered: “*Nobody doubts.*” [ACO II, Vol. 1, Pt. 2, 82]

Atticus, bishop of Nicopolis, asked for a few days' delay, in which the bishops could examine St. Cyril's letter to Nestorius containing the twelve anathematisms, and the letter of "our lord and most holy father Leo, who graces the Apostolic See." [ACO II, Vol. 1, Pt. 2, 83]

This request led to another exclamation from the bishops: "All of us believe as Leo does— thus do we believe. None of us doubts; we have already subscribed." Nevertheless, the imperial commissioners, remarking that "it is fitting to persuade all those who are in doubt," granted five days in which bishops could meet at the house of Anatolius, "so as to teach those who are doubting." [ACO II, Vol. 1, Pt. 2, 83]

The Condemnation of Dioscorus

As the next session opened on October 13, Paschasinus, a papal legate, said through an interpreter:

It is known to this God-beloved council that sacred letters [i.e., imperial *sacra*] were sent to the blessed and apostolic and universal pope, Leo, to induce him to deign to be present before this holy council. However, because neither ancient custom calls for this, nor did the general necessity of the time appear to permit it, he commanded our lowliness to preside for him at this holy council. [ACO II, Vol. 3, Pt. 2, 18]

Eusebius of Dorylaeum, who had barely escaped from the Robber Council two years earlier, was prepared to present a formal accusation of Dioscorus. Paschasinus directed the notary to read it. Four other accusations were read against Dioscorus. The indictments, addressed to "the most holy and God-beloved Leo, universal archbishop and patriarch of Great Rome," and the synod, were composed by various Alexandrian clergy and laity. [ACO II, Vol. 1, Pt. 2, 15 sq.]

The accusations speak of unbelievable acts of tyranny and violence— homes destroyed, exiles and even homicides. Ironically, one of

the accusations came from the priest Athanasius, described in the acts as a nephew of St. Cyril. Dioscorus was also accused of having persuaded the Egyptian bishops to subscribe to the excommunication of “the most holy and most blessed bishop of the apostolic see of Great Rome.” [ACO II, Vol. 1, Pt. 2, 16]

When the papal legate Paschasinus asked the bishops to indicate the appropriate penalty for Dioscorus, the exchange went:

PASCHASINUS. “Does Your Piety consent that we apply ecclesiastical punishment against him? Do you consent?”

THE BISHOPS. “We all consent; let him [Dioscorus] receive what is in accordance with the rules.”

PASCHASINUS. “Does Your Piety command that we apply ecclesiastical sentence against him?”

THE BISHOPS. “We consent.”

JULIAN, BISHOP OF HYPAEA. “Holy Fathers, listen... Your Holiness holds the authority of the most holy Leo... and [the council] summoned [Dioscorus] once, and a second time, and a third time, and he was utterly unwilling to obey. We therefore ask Your Holiness, who have the place of the most holy Archbishop Leo, to announce and decree the sentence provided for in the canons. For all of us, and the entire Ecumenical Synod, are ready to vote the same way as Your Holiness.”

PASCHASINUS. “Again I say: what is agreeable to Your Beatitude?”

MAXIMUS, BISHOP OF ANTIOCH. “We are ready to vote the same way as seems [proper] to Your Holiness.” [ACO II: Vol. 1: 2: 27–28]

Dioscorus: “Leo... has stripped him of the episcopate”

The legates pronounced this sentence against Dioscorus:

The acts committed by Dioscorus, once bishop of the great Church of Alexandria, against the order of the holy rules and ecclesiastical discipline, have been manifested both from what was examined in the earlier session and from today’s transactions. For presuming the primacy for himself, he... irregularly received into communion Eutyches, a man with opinions similar to his own, who had been regularly condemned by his own bishop— (that is, our most holy father and former archbishop, Flavian)— before he met with the God-beloved bishops at Ephesus. *But to the latter indeed the Apostolic See has granted pardon for what was done by them there against their will, to those who have continued up to the present in obedience to the most holy Archbishop Leo*, and to the entire holy and universal council: for this reason he also received them into his communion as his fellow faithful... [Dioscorus], on the other hand, has continued boasting to this day for what should have made him mourn and prostrate himself to the ground... neither did he allow the letter of the most blessed Pope Leo, written to Flavian of holy memory, to be read, even when he was frequently requested by those who brought it to have it read, and had promised with an oath to let it be read: because it was not read, he brought scandal and harm to God’s holy Church all over the world.

Yet even after he had dared to commit such deeds, we deliberated, to the effect that some clemency might be granted him for his prior abysmal actions, just as it was granted to the other most reverend bishops, and to those who did not have an authority of judging similar to his. But because he has greatly exceeded his earlier iniquity by his second excesses— (for he even presumed to pronounce

excommunication against the most holy and most blessed archbishop of Great Rome, Leo) —moreover many accusations full of his many iniquities were offered against him in the holy and great council, and having been summoned once, twice and a third time by the most God-beloved bishops, he was utterly unwilling to obey... and he received those who had been regularly condemned by various Councils, contrary to the divine laws; therefore did he elicit the sentence against himself, often trampling upon the ecclesiastical canons.

Therefore the most holy and most blessed archbishop of great and old Rome, Leo, through us and through the present holy synod, together with the thrice blessed apostle Peter worthy of all praise, who is the rock and foundation of the Catholic Church, and the foundation of the orthodox faith, has stripped him both of the dignity of the episcopate and of all priestly ministry. Therefore let this great and holy synod, in conformity with the canons, decree with regard to the above-mentioned Dioscorus. [ACO II, Vol. 1: 2: 28-29]

Anatolius, bishop of Constantinople, said, “Thinking the same thing in all respects as the apostolic throne, I too vote the same way regarding the condemnation of Dioscorus, former bishop of the great city of Alexandria...” Joining in the sentence, many of the bishops mentioned their concurrence with the judgment already pronounced by Leo, by Anatolius, or both of them. [Mansi 6: 1047 sq.]

Christ “showed the truth in the marvelous Leo”

The Acts of the Council contain a synodal letter to Valentinian and Marcian, the western and eastern emperors. Praising the rulers for their zeal, the bishops censure Dioscorus “first, because he prohibited the recitation of the letter from the most holy archbishop of Old Rome, Leo, sent to Flavian of holy memory... to the most reverend bishops who had met at Ephesus,

even after many promises and oaths on his part...” and because Dioscorus had reinstated Eutyches, “although the most holy and most blessed archbishop of Old Rome, Leo, had decreed what was fitting through the same letters, and had in writing condemned the wicked unbelief of Eutyches...” [Mansi 6: 1097-1100]

In another report to Empress Pulcheria, the bishops added that Christ “showed the truth in the marvelous Leo, for, as He used the wise Peter, He also uses him to assert it.” [Mansi 6: 1101-2]

In the fourth session, which opened on October 17, the papal legates declared that the council accepted the faith of Nicea, of the Council of Constantinople [381], St. Cyril’s exposition of that faith, and “thirdly, the writings of the most blessed and apostolic man Leo, pope of the Universal Church, condemning the heresy of Nestorius and Eutyches... similarly, the holy synod holds and follows this faith: it can neither add nor subtract anything further.” When this declaration was translated into Greek, the bishops exclaimed: “All of us so believe; so were we baptized; thus do we baptize; thus have we believed; thus do we believe.” [ACO II, Vol. 3, Pt. 2, 105-6]

The judges called upon the bishops to declare whether the Creeds of Nicea and Constantinople harmonized “with the letter of the most reverend Archbishop Leo.” Anatolius of Constantinople answered first, declaring that Leo’s letter was in agreement with the faith of the Councils of Nicea, Constantinople [381] and Ephesus, “wherefore I have agreed, and freely subscribed to the same letter.” [ACO II, Vol. 1, Pt. 2, 93-4]

The legates followed, asserting that it was “manifest and beyond question” that there was one faith “of the most blessed pope Leo, ruler of the Apostolic See,” of the Fathers of Nicea and Constantinople, and of Cyril. The rest of the bishops pronounced the Tome of Leo in conformity with the faith of earlier ecumenical councils. [ACO II, Vol. 3, Pt. 2, 106 sq.]

Some bishops from Illyricum and Palestine had expressed doubts about three passages of the Tome of Leo. One of them announced, “we have learned that our most holy father and archbishop Leo is most orthodox,”

adding that the legates of the Apostolic See had been well prepared to remove all doubts, and had explained whatever difficulty had resulted from the obscurity of the language. The Fathers added that all the Illyrians had struck the same note, “with whom we all agree.” The same bishop noted his acceptance of the first three ecumenical councils including Ephesus, whose presidents had been Celestine of Rome and Cyril of Alexandria. [ACO II, Vol. 3, Pt. 2, 109–110]

Polychronius, bishop of Epiphania in Cilicia, added that the apostle [Paul] had praised the faith of the Romans, “which faith that holy church has preserved from the beginning.” “This faith,” Polychronius added, “we have held and we do hold from of old, in which we have both been baptized and do baptize.” [ACO II, Vol. 1, Pt. 2, 104]

The Egyptian Bishops’ Plea: “We will be killed!”

One group still had to be managed: the Egyptian bishops, who offered a profession of faith purporting to uphold the faith of Nicea and of their fathers, Peter Martyr, Athanasius, Theophilus and Cyril. Further, the Egyptians anathematized Arianism, Eunomianism, Nestorianism, “those who say that the flesh of our Lord came from heaven, not from the holy Mother of God, Mary,” and “all heresies that believe and teach outside the Catholic Church.” [ACO II, Vol. 1, Pt. 2, 110]

The bishops exclaimed:

Why did they not anathematize the teaching of Eutyches? They offered their petitions with deceit. *Let them subscribe to the letter of Leo*, anathematizing Eutyches and his teaching. *Let them consent to the letter of Leo*. They want to deceive us, and leave. [ACO II, Vol. 1, Pt. 2, 111]

Diogenes, bishop of Cyzicus, said:

The synod was called because of Eutyches, not because of anything else. The bishop of Rome wrote because

of him. We have all consented to [Leo's] letter, which follows the exposition of the holy fathers. [ACO II, Vol. 1, Pt. 2, 111]

The Roman legates agreed: "*Let them say if they consent to the letter of the Apostolic See, and if they say anathema to Eutyches.*" Cecropius, bishop of Sebastopolis added: "Let them subscribe to the letter of the most blessed Pope Leo, and anathematize Eutyches and his teaching." [ACO II, Vol. 1, Pt. 2, 111]

Speaking for his colleagues, an Egyptian bishop named Hieracus explained that according to canon 6 of Nicea, all Egypt had to follow the bishop of Alexandria, without whom nothing could be done. In other words, unless a new bishop of Alexandria were chosen, the Egyptians' hands were tied. Were the Egyptians really using canon 6 to weasel out of signing the decrees of the council? Eusebius of Dorylaeum thought so. "They are lying," he said. [ACO II, Vol. 1, Pt. 2, 111]

Photius, bishop of Tyre, asked: "Do you consent to the letter of Leo, the most blessed archbishop of Rome, or not?" The Roman legates asked, "Are they ignorant of the orthodox, Catholic faith to this very day, and do they still await another man's opinion?" [ACO II, Vol. 1, Pt. 2, 112]

When these words were translated into Greek, the bishops declared: "*He who does not agree with the letter of the most holy archbishop Leo is a heretic.*" [ACO II, Vol. 1, Pt. 2, 112]

The council called on the Egyptians to anathematize Eutyches. When the Egyptians complied, the Fathers, raising their voices, added: "*Let them subscribe to the letter of Leo. He who does not subscribe to it is a heretic.*" [ACO II, Vol. 1, Pt. 2, 112]

Photius, bishop of Tyre, asked:

How can they try to have an ordination [at Alexandria] if they do not believe the same way as this holy and ecumenical council? For if they believe aright, let

them show their own intention, as it concerns the faith, and receive the letter of Archbishop Leo. If not, they are excommunicated. [ACO II, Vol. 1, Pt. 2, 112]

When the bishops added: “This we all say; this we all think,” the Egyptians threw themselves on the mercy of the court, pleading that they would be killed if they signed as requested, and returned to Egypt without an archbishop of Alexandria. Lucentius, a papal legate, said:

If [the Egyptians] are in error, let them be instructed by your magnificence, for ten men cannot create a prejudice to a synod of six hundred bishops, or to the Catholic faith. [ACO II, Vol. 1, Pt. 2, 112-3]

The Egyptians continued to plead for their lives: “We shall be killed; have mercy on us. Let us die at your hands, and not there. *Let an archbishop be made for us, and we shall subscribe and consent.*” The bishops, however, declared: “They are heretics.” [ACO II, Vol. 1, Pt. 2, 113]

The Egyptians continued to implore the council to give them an archbishop, giving reassurances that they meant no disobedience to the synod. Finally, the judges relented somewhat. The papal legates called for guarantees that the Egyptians would stay in Constantinople until a new archbishop was ordained for Alexandria. [ACO II, Vol. 1, Pt. 2, 114]

The Definition of Faith, and a Skirmish in the Council

During the fifth session, on October 22, the imperial commissioners reminded the bishops about the request to give an exposition of their faith. Led by the Roman legates, some bishops had objected that Leo’s letter was sufficient, and that another exposition of the faith should not be made. In spite of that, a group of bishops led by Anatolius of Constantinople had composed an exposition of the faith, and they wanted the council to approve it. Acclamations on the council floor revealed that most of the bishops were inclined to accept the formula.

While the proposed definition allowed that Christ was “of” two natures, it did not clearly confess that in Him there were two natures. What was the difference between these two formulas? Depending on the interpretation, a huge one. Even Dioscorus could allow that Christ was “of” two natures— that is, *before* the union. However, the Eutychians and monophysites would never admit that in Christ there were two natures *after* the union. To define that Christ was “of” two natures was tantamount to defining nothing. Only a clear statement that there were two natures in Christ— that is, two natures after the union— could have any chance of fulfilling the purpose of the council. [DTC 3: 2200-01]

The Roman legates reacted forcefully, announcing:

If they [the bishops] do not agree with the letter of the apostolic and most blessed man, Pope Leo, command that rescripts be given to us, so that we may return, and that there [in the West] the synod may be celebrated. [Mansi 7: 102.ACO II: 1: 2: 123]

Many bishops, however, continued to defend the definition, declaring, “the definition is orthodox. He who does not subscribe is a heretic,” and so on. The imperial commissioners said: “Dioscorus said that he had condemned Flavian because he [Flavian] said ‘two natures,’ whereas the definition has ‘of two natures.’” [Mansi 7: 104.ACO II: 1: 2: 124]

Placed on the defensive, Anatolius of Constantinople answered:

Dioscorus was not condemned because of the faith [sic!], but because he excommunicated lord Archbishop Leo, and was summoned three times, and did not come; and therefore he was condemned. [Mansi 7: 104.ACO II: 1: 2: 124]

Dioscorus certainly had been condemned for having had the audacity to excommunicate Pope Leo, and failing to answer the triple summons, but *only* for those reasons? Had not the legates, while pronouncing the sentence

against Dioscorus, cited his illegal reception of Eutyches, “a man with opinions similar to his own”? Had not Anatolius himself concurred with the sentence?

The response of Anatolius to the Imperial Commissioners showed up the weakness of his own position, and of the proposed definition of faith. Another exchange followed between the Imperial Commissioners and the bishops:

COMMISSIONERS. “Do you accept the letter of the most holy Leo?”

BISHOPS. “We have accepted it, and subscribed to it.”

COMMISSIONERS. “Then let those things that are inserted in it be inserted into the definition.” [Mansi 7: 104. ACO II: 1: 2: 124]

The matter went all the way to the emperor, who offered the bishops three alternatives:

1. To resolve the problem, the Fathers could set up a commission made up of representatives chosen from the “East,” (the patriarchate of Antioch), the exarchate of Asia, and the provinces of Illyricum, Thrace and Pontus, along with Anatolius of Constantinople and the Roman legates.

2. Each bishop could manifest his faith through his own metropolitan.

3. The council could be held in the west, “because Your Piety was unwilling to give an unquestionable definition of the true and orthodox faith here.” [Mansi 7: 104-5. ACO II: Vol. 1: 2: 124-5]

At this news, there were more outbursts in defense of the proposed definition: “Those who contradict are Nestorians. Those who contradict, let them go to Rome.” [ACO II: 1: 2: 125]

“Whom do you follow? The most holy Leo, or Dioscorus?”

Once again the commissioners helped to clarify matters. A new exchange between them and the bishops went like this:

COMMISSIONERS. “The most holy Leo said that there were two natures in Christ, united without confusion, without transformation, and without division in the one Only-Begotten Son, our Savior. *Whom then do you follow? The most holy Leo, or Dioscorus?*”

BISHOPS. “As Leo, so do we believe. Leo expounded correctly. Those who contradict are Eutychians.”

COMMISSIONERS. “Then add to the definition that, in accordance with the sentence of our most holy Leo, *in Christ there are two natures* united without transformation, without separation and without confusion.” [Mansi 7: 105.ACO II: 1: 2: 125]

The Definition of the council did incorporate this language, praising the Tome of Leo as agreeing with Peter’s confession and as “a certain common pillar against those who thought badly.” [Mansi 7: 113–16]

At the end of the fifth session, the Acts of the Council contain an address of Marcian, who characterized Leo as “governing the apostolic throne,” and the papal legates signed the Acts on behalf of Leo, “the most blessed and apostolic pope of the universal church.” [Mansi 7: 132–6]

In an allocution to Marcian, the bishops defended Pope Leo against the charge that he had innovated in the faith, proclaiming that God had prepared unto victory “a warrior unwounded by any error, the Pope of the Roman Church, girding him on every side with the doctrines of truth, so that like Peter, who was fervent in affection, he might lead every understanding to God.” [Mansi 7: 455 sq.]

A New Patriarchate

After the first six sessions, the dogmatic work of the council— the

part which most intimately concerned the Universal Church— essentially had concluded. The council turned to certain special cases involving individual bishops.

In the eighth session, bishops Maximus of Antioch and Juvenal of Jerusalem reached an agreement. While Antioch retained jurisdiction over Arabia and both Phoenicias, the see of Jerusalem received First, Second and Third Palestine. Maximus, however, had consented only on the condition that this agreement be “approved by our venerable father, the archbishop of Greater Rome.” The Roman legates consented to the agreement. [Mansi 7: 180-82, 770]

Between the bishops of these two sees, there had been much contention. St. Leo wrote to Maximus of Antioch that since the Council of Ephesus, Juvenal had been trying to aggrandize his own see. Thanks to forged documents, Juvenal had attempted to obtain “the principality of the province of Palestine.” Alarmed at this abuse of authority— Leo assures us— St. Cyril of Alexandria had alerted Rome. [Ep. 119. PL 54: 1044-5]

In his letter to Maximus, Pope Leo explained that the legates from Rome did not have unlimited authority:

...if anything is rumored to have been done by those brethren whom I sent to take my place in the holy synod, it will be utterly invalid, for they were sent by the Apostolic See for one purpose: that with heresies destroyed, they should be defenders of the Catholic faith... [PL 54: 1045]

Pope Leo did not expressly mention the idea of a “patriarchate of Jerusalem,” but repeated that the canons of Nicea should not be changed. Anything contrary to those canons, the pope continued, “will never be able to obtain the consent of the Apostolic See.” [PL 54: 1045]

Theodoret, Put to the Test

Much to the chagrin of the Egyptians, Theodoret, bishop of Cyrus, had

been allowed to sit as a bishop at the council. As a former defender of Nestorius, however, Theodore was vulnerable to charges of heresy. In the eighth session, Theodore's opponents put him to the test, calling on him to prove his orthodoxy by anathematizing Nestorius. For a moment Theodore hedged, but when the bishops began calling him a heretic, Theodore anathematized Nestorius, and those who did not confess the Virgin Mary as *Theotokos*, Mother of God, adding: "I have subscribed both to the Definition of Faith and to the letter of the most holy Archbishop Leo, and so I believe." [Mansi 7: 189]

The imperial commissioners interjected:

All doubt about the most reverend bishop Theodore has been resolved, for he has both anathematized Nestorius before us, and has been received by the most holy God-beloved archbishop of Old Rome, Leo, and freely received the Definition of Faith pronounced by Your Piety, and further, he has subscribed to the letter of the above-mentioned most holy Archbishop Leo. It remains, therefore, that sentence be pronounced by your reverence, so that he may receive his church, as the most holy Archbishop Leo has judged. [Mansi 7: 189]

The bishops exclaimed:

Theodore is worthy of his see. [Let] the orthodox [be restored] to the church. Let the church receive her shepherd; let the church receive the orthodox teacher. Theodore is worthy of his see. Many years to Archbishop Leo. After God, Leo has judged. [Mansi 7: 189. ACO II: Vol. 1: 3: p. 10]

The papal legates concurred, adding:

The most blessed and most holy archbishop of the Universal Church of the city of Rome, Leo, long ago received the most holy and venerable bishop Theodore into communion, as the letters sent from him to our lowliness bear witness. [ACO II, Vol. 1: 3: p. 10]

Inasmuch as Theodoret had anathematized Eutyches and Nestorius in writing and before the entire council, the legates added, Theodoret should be restored to his church. The other bishops, beginning with Anatolius, agreed. [Mansi 7: 189-91]

The Case of Maximus of Antioch

Bishop Domnus of Antioch had unhappily consented to the condemnation of Flavian at the Robber Council of Ephesus. Dioscorus deposed Domnus anyway, and the hapless Domnus was exiled. Anatolius of Constantinople had then ordained Maximus as bishop of Antioch, which was a violation of the canons of Nicea: the bishop should have been chosen by a canonical election, and consecrated by his fellow provincials.

In spite of the irregular manner in which Maximus was ordained, Pope Leo decided that Maximus should continue as bishop of Antioch. Alluding to this decision, Anatolius, bishop of Constantinople, said:

We decree that nothing done in that so called council [the Robber Council] shall hold good, except concerning the most holy Maximus, bishop of the great city of Antioch, *since most holy Leo, archbishop of Rome, by receiving him into communion, has judged that he should govern the church at Antioch, which prescription I too have followed and approved, and all the present holy council.* [ACO II, Vol. 3: 3: 47]

The papal legates also noted that “the holy and most blessed pope” had “confirmed the episcopate of the holy and venerable Maximus, bishop of the church of Antioch...” [ACO II, Vol. 3, Pt. 3, 6. Mansi 7: 258, 270]

Lucentius: “The Apostolic See ought not to be humiliated...”

In the sixteenth session, when most of the bishops had already gone, the legates Paschasinus and Lucentius told the commissioners, “If your magnificence so commands, we have something to refer to you.” Told to “say what you like,” Paschasinus announced:

...yesterday...certain actions are said to have been done which we consider opposed to both the ecclesiastical canons and discipline. We ask, therefore, that your magnificence command these things to be reread, so that the entire brotherhood may inspect whether what was done was just or unjust. [ACO II, Vol. 3, Pt. 3, 101]

Aetius, archdeacon of Constantinople, declared that the custom for councils was that after the main business was concluded and decreed, certain necessary business could be decreed. The church of Constantinople, Aetius added, had certain business that needed to be done: "We asked our lords the bishops from Rome to participate in these actions [but] they refused, saying that they had no such mandate." The actions had not been done in secret, Aetius added, but in order and canonically. [ACO II: 3: 3: 101]

A secretary read the following canon, known as the twenty-eighth of Chalcedon:

Following in all respects the decrees of the holy fathers, and recognizing the canon of the 150 [bishops at Constantinople, in 381], which was just read, we also decree and vote the same things regarding the privileges of the most holy Church of Constantinople, New Rome. With reason did the Fathers render privileges to the see of Old Rome because it was the imperial city, and moved by the same considerations the 150 bishops beloved of God awarded equal privileges to the most holy see of New Rome, judging with good reason that the city honored by the imperial power and the senate, and which enjoys the same privileges as old imperial Rome, should also be magnified in ecclesiastical matters, and hold second place after it. [We also decree] that only the metropolitans for the dioceses of Pontus, Asia and Thrace, and also [other] bishops of those dioceses in barbarian regions, are to be consecrated from the most holy see of the most holy Church of Constantinople [while] each metropolitan in the dioceses

named, with the bishops of the eparchy, is to ordain bishops of those eparchies, as it is ordered in the holy canons. The metropolitans of the dioceses named, however, as has been said, are to be consecrated by the Archbishop of Constantinople, after they have been elected according to custom, and [the bishop of Constantinople] has been informed. [ACO II, Vol. 1, Pt. 3, 88-9]

“This privilege... why do they seek it now?”

The legate Lucentius complained that the bishops had been deceived or forced into signing canon 28. When the bishops exclaimed, “nobody was forced,” Lucentius replied:

...it is clear that having set aside the constitutions of the 318 [bishops at Nicea] they have followed those of the 150 [at Constantinople in 381], which are not included in the synodical canons, and which they say were decreed almost eighty years ago. If therefore [the bishops of Constantinople] have exercised this privilege in these times, why do they seek it now? If they have never had it, why do they seek it? [ACO II, Vol. 3, Pt. 3, 108-9]

Archdeacon Aetius of Constantinople asked the Roman legates to explain their instructions on this point. The priest Boniface answered, “The most blessed and apostolic pope gave us this command, among others,” and read this instruction:

You must not allow the constitution of the holy fathers [at Nicea] to be violated or diminished by any temerity, preserving in every way the dignity of my person in you [whom we have sent in our stead]: if anyone, relying on the splendor of their cities, attempt any usurpation for themselves, you are to resist them with due constancy. [ACO II, 3: 3: 109]

The imperial commissioners asked both sides to read the canons on which they relied. Paschasinus, the Roman legate, read canon 6 of Nicea with this introduction: *“That the Roman Church always had the primacy.”* Constantine, Secretary of the Consistory, using a Greek codex from Archdeacon Aetius, read canon 6 of Nicea and parts of the canons of the Council of Constantinople of 381. [ACO II, 3: 3: 109–110]

The commissioners asked the bishops of Pontus and Asia whether they had signed canon 28 freely, or under compulsion. Several bishops made declarations that they had signed freely. Eusebius of Dorylaeum, one of the heroes of the Robber Council of Ephesus, even added, “I have freely subscribed, because I also read this rule to the most blessed pope in the city of Rome in the presence of clergy of Constantinople, and he accepted it [sic!].” [ACO II, 3: 3: 111–112]

The imperial commissioners followed with a declaration which in effect approved the provisions of canon 28, and asked the bishops for their opinion. The bishops answered:

This is a just sentence; this we all say; this is agreeable to all; this is a just decree. Let what has been decreed prevail. This is a just sentence. Everything has been decreed in order. We ask you to dismiss us. By the health of the emperors, dismiss us. We all continue in this opinion; we all say the same thing. [ACO II, 3: 3: 113]

Lucentius was not pleased. In the name of the Apostolic See, he uttered a protest:

The Apostolic See ought not to be humiliated in our presence, and therefore we implore your highness to abrogate whatever was done yesterday in prejudice to the canons and rules in our absence: if not, let our contradiction be recorded in these acts, so that we may know what we must report to the apostolic man, pope of the Universal Church, so that he himself may pronounce sentence either

regarding the injury to his see or the overturning of the canons. [ACO II, 3: 3: 113-14]

About 200 bishops subscribed to the proposed canon, either in person or by proxy. [ACO II, Vol. 3: 3: 102 sq.]

In November 451, the bishops wrote to Pope Leo, whom they described as “having been constituted unto all the interpreter of the voice of Blessed Peter.” In relation to the council, the bishops continued, Leo “had been in charge as the head to the members through those who held your place, demonstrating good counsel.” [*Inter epp. S. Leonis*, 98. PL 54: 952]

As for Dioscorus, the bishops wrote, “he even extended his madness against him to whom the care of the vineyard was entrusted by the Savior, that is, against Your Holiness, and he thought of excommunicating you who hasten to unite the body of the Church.” [PL 54: 954]

The council announced the provisions of canon 28, professing confidence that “when Your Holiness learns of them, you will accept and confirm” them. It had long been the custom, the Fathers wrote, that the Church of Constantinople ordain the metropolitans of the provinces of Asia, Pontus and Thrace. We have confirmed this provision by a synodical sentence, the bishops continued, “not so much granting anything to the see of Constantinople as providing peace for the provinces,” because disputes over metropolitan elections in those areas had often led to discord. [PL 54: 956]

The Fathers added that they had confirmed canon 3 of the Council of Constantinople of 381, “which pronounces that after your most holy see, Constantinople is to have the primacy of the second place.” The bishops credited Leo with having “often been accustomed to extend a most powerful ray of your apostolic see to the Church of Constantinople, as you are accustomed without envy to distribute good things to members of your household.” [PL 54: 956-8]

Keys Over the Christian World

The bishops asked Leo to embrace what they had decided “in order to remove all confusion and to confirm ecclesiastical discipline,” noting that the legates from Rome “vehemently attempted to resist” the canon, undoubtedly willing that “this good thing also begin from your providence, so that the restoration of order, like that of the faith, be imputed to you.” [PL 54: 958]

Noting that the emperors had regarded Leo’s judgment as if it were a law, and that “every good thing done by the children redounds to the ecumenical fathers,” the bishops wrote: “We ask you, therefore, to honor our judgment with your votes as well, and just as we have granted our consent to the head in good things, so also let the summit fulfill what is fitting for the children.” [PL 54: 958]

On December 18, 451, Emperor Marcian wrote to Pope Leo, asking him to command that the decrees of Chalcedon be enforced. Marcian observed that the bishops had accepted Leo’s exposition of the faith, “as the truth required,” and asked Leo to accept the provision of canon 28, “namely that the bishop of the city of Constantinople obtain the second place after the Apostolic See.” Marcian seemed puzzled that the legates had “prohibited anything to be ordered by the synod” about the privileges of the Church of Constantinople. [*Inter epp. S. Leonis*, 100. PL 54: 970–72]

Anatolius of Constantinople also wrote to Pope Leo:

We have pursued this matter, rightly trusting that Your Beatitude would consider the honor of the See of Constantinople as your own, for your apostolic throne has long had solicitude for it, and concord with it, and has always abundantly granted help to it, in whatever it needed. [*Inter epp. S. Leonis*, 101. PL 54: 982]

For “sixty or seventy years,” Anatolius continued, the bishops of Constantinople have been accustomed to ordain the metropolitans of Pontus, Thrace and Asia. In spite of that, the legates from Rome, “ignoring the intention of Your Holiness,” had opposed the canon, “disturbing the council

and filling it with confusion, considering this see as nothing.” As if overlooking that snub, Anatolius wrote, “the see of Constantinople has as its father your apostolic throne, joining itself to you in a particular and especial manner.” [PL 54: 982-84]

In winter 451, Pope Leo heard from the bishops of Gaul, who announced that everybody there had subscribed to the Tome to Flavian. The bishops were grateful that God had given a bishop of such great holiness, faith and apostolic doctrine to the Apostolic See, “from whence, by Christ’s mercy, the wellspring and origin of our religion has flowed out.” The bishops told Leo that they prayed that God show His mercy to His Church spread throughout the world, “by preserving Your Apostleship.” [PL 54: 966-70]

On January 27, 452 Pope Leo wrote to the bishops of Gaul, acknowledging receipt of their letter. Full of praise for their orthodoxy, he regretted only that the bishops of Gaul had not written *before* his legates had left for Chalcedon. Had the letter from Gaul arrived in time, Pope Leo would have forwarded it to the council through his legates. Leo praised the council for having accepted “the letters of my lowliness, confirmed by the authority and merit of my master, the most blessed apostle Peter.” The pope added:

Dioscorus of Alexandria was also condemned in his impiety, lest that Church, which at the very beginning of the Gospel had as its founder Blessed Mark, the disciple of the most blessed apostle Peter, agreeing indeed in every respect with the authority of his teacher...suffer unworthy captivity under the domination of a heretic. [PL 54: 983-8]

In February, Leo announced to the bishops of Gaul that “my brethren, who presided over the eastern synod in my stead,” had returned, and he forwarded a copy of the sentence against Dioscorus. [PL 54: 988-92]

Pope Leo: let Anatolius “be content with the royal city...”

On May 22, 452, Pope Leo replied to Marcian. Complaining that

the peace of the Universal Church had been disturbed by the spirit of ambition, Leo declared that “outside of that rock, which the Lord set at the foundation, no edifice is stable.” As for Anatolius, the pope continued, “let him be content with the royal city, which he cannot make an apostolic see.” Canon 28 could only be ratified at the expense of the canons of Nicea, which, Leo wrote, were not to be changed:

For the privileges of the Churches, established by the canons of the holy fathers, and fixed by the decrees of the venerable Council of Nicea, cannot be uprooted by any improbity, or changed by any novelty. [Ep. 104. PL 54: 995]

The pope defended his legates, declaring that they had been altogether justified in opposing the canon. [PL 54: 995-7]

On the same day Leo wrote to Pulcheria, censuring the ambition of Anatolius. The pope rejected categorically canon 28, writing:

As for agreements of bishops opposed to the rules of the holy canons established at Nicea... by the authority of Blessed Peter we declare them utterly null and void by an all-embracing definition. [Ep. 105. PL 54: 1000]

Leo also wrote to Anatolius on the same day. After the questionable origins of his ordination, the letter noted, Anatolius had ordained a bishop of Antioch, which was against the canons. Now, Leo continued, Anatolius was trying to infringe upon the constitutions of the Council of Nicea, “so that, with these places subject to your authority, all metropolitan bishops may be deprived of their own honor”; further, Anatolius had used the council as the occasion to further an unheard-of ambition; thus the legates from Rome, the pope continued, “who presided over the synod in my stead,” quite properly opposed canon 28. [Ep. 106. PL 54: 1001 sq.]

Canon 3 of Constantinople, the forerunner of canon 28, was never brought to the knowledge of my predecessors, the pope continued, adding:

Let not the rights of provincial primacies be uprooted; nor should metropolitan bishops be defrauded of privileges instituted from of old. Let none of the dignity of the see of Alexandria perish, which it merited through the holy evangelist Mark, the disciple of Blessed Peter, nor as Dioscorus goes to ruin through stubbornness in impiety should the splendor of so great a Church be dimmed by the darkness of another. Let also the Church of Antioch, in which the name of “Christian” first arose at the preaching of Blessed Peter the apostle, persevere in the order constituted by the fathers, and having been established in the third rank, let it never go any lower. [PL 54: 1007]

Writing to Julian of Cos, Leo declared that to ratify canon 28 would be “the destruction of ecclesiastical discipline.” Leo was clearly disturbed that Julian appeared to be willing to accept the canon. [PL 54: 1009-10]

Meanwhile, at Constantinople, Anatolius had replaced his archdeacon, Aetius— of whom Leo thought very highly— with a certain Andrew, who to Leo was suspect of heresy. Complaining that Anatolius did not care very much about the mystery of human salvation, “or his own,” Leo made Julian of Cos a papal representative in the east, and “specially enjoined” on Julian the task of preparing a complete Latin version of the Acts of Chalcedon. In letters to the emperors, Leo called for the restoration of Aetius and the removal of Andrew. [PL 54: 1019 sq.]

Doubts in the East: Had Leo Confirmed the Council?

The dispute about canon 28 was leading to doubts in the east about whether Leo had approved the decrees of Chalcedon. On February 15, 453, Emperor Marcian wrote to Leo, asking him to confirm the ecumenical council. The absence of such a confirmation, Marcian claimed, was being exploited by Eutychian heretics. Marcian asked Leo to send letters making it clear to all the churches that he, Leo, had confirmed the Council of Chalcedon. [PL 54: 1018-20]

Keys Over the Christian World

The pope replied a month later. Writing to Marcian on March 21, Leo reiterated that Rome had confirmed the decrees of Chalcedon *with regard to the faith*: by all means, Marcian should command that all bishops be informed of this fact. [PL 54: 1031-5]

Leo also wrote directly to the bishops, explaining that he had accepted the dogmatic decrees of Chalcedon, but not any measures contrary to the canons of Nicea. In other words, Rome accepted the council *except* for canon 28. [PL 54: 1027-31]

The dispute about canon 28 continued to lead to skirmishes in the east. In a letter to Julian of Cos, Leo intimated that Anatolius had tried to get the bishops of Illyricum to subscribe to the canon. [PL 54: 1037-40]

On June 11, 453, Pope Leo wrote to Maximus, bishop of Antioch, urging him to hold on to the doctrine of Blessed Peter, greatest of apostles, a doctrine which Peter had indeed taught throughout the world, but with a special authority at Antioch and Rome. Reminding Maximus that “the rock of the Catholic faith, after which Peter was named by the Lord,” allowed for no traces of either Nestorianism or Eutychianism, Leo called on him to give no quarter to these heresies in the churches subject to Antioch. Leo also called for frequent reports about events in the east, and assured Maximus of Rome’s attachment to the canons of Nicea, which had reaffirmed the rights of Antioch. [PL 54: 1040-6]

Leo wrote in the same sense to Theodoret, bishop of Cyrus, erstwhile appellant to the Apostolic See in the jurisdiction of Antioch. The orthodox faith in the Incarnation, which the Lord “had first defined by our ministry,” had been “confirmed by the irrevocable assent of the [episcopal] brotherhood,” Leo explained. Leo characterized his own see as the one which the Lord of all had established to preside over the rest. Even where our judgments had been disputed, Leo explained, it had resulted in a greater good, because the greatest benefits are often those that require the greatest effort to gain. Thankful for “the utmost care of the most blessed Peter for us all,” Leo declared that God had “confirmed the judgment of his see in the definition of the faith.” Leo wanted his letter to Maximus of Antioch, written

“for the good of the Universal Church,” to come to the knowledge of all, confident that “what we have enjoined on our aforesaid brother and fellow bishop” would be carried out. [PL 54: 1046–55]

Disturbances at Jerusalem

The pope had another serious problem on his mind. Bands of fanatical Palestinian monks had created disturbances and even driven out Juvenal, the legitimate bishop of Jerusalem, from his see. On June 15, Leo wrote to Empress Pulcheria, urging her to help calm the monks down and bring them back to orthodoxy. [PL 54: 1060–61]

Citing the solicitude he owed to “the Universal Church, and all her children,” Leo wrote directly to the monks. Although his letter to Flavian was in itself sufficient to manifest the truth, and needed no further justification, the pope wrote, he went on to give detailed refutations of *both* the Nestorian and Eutychian heresies. According to Leo, the Tome to Flavian had been misunderstood, thanks to translators who were either “incompetent” or “of bad will”; it was not true, as many were repeating, that Leo was a Nestorian: anybody who said so was, in effect, refuting a doctrine “which I myself, in accordance with the institution of ancient doctrine, also detest.” Finally, with wisdom, majesty and paternal firmness, Leo urged the monks: “Turn away, my sons, turn away from these diabolical persuasions.” [PL 54: 1061–8]

In early 454 Leo wrote to Marcian again, praising him for having ended the riots around Jerusalem and enabling Juvenal to return. Leo promised his renewed favor to Anatolius of Constantinople, if only Anatolius would obey the canons, and not seek honors at the expense of other sees. Leo also called for continued reports from Julian of Cos. [PL 54: 1068–74]

Canon 28: “the whole force and confirmation... reserved for the authority of Your Blessedness”

In April 454 Leo heard from Anatolius, who appeared to have felt a bit left out in the recent developments. Promising obedience to Leo’s judgment,

Keys Over the Christian World

Anatolius asked for a renewal of his old friendly correspondence with Leo. Anatolius also announced that Aetius had been restored and that Andrew, who had been suspect of heresy, had been separated from the church, along with those “who had been against Flavian, our father and bishop of holy memory.” As for canon 28, Anatolius informed Leo that “the whole force and confirmation of the acts had been reserved for the authority of Your Blessedness.” Disclaiming responsibility for the canon, Anatolius told Leo that other members of the clergy at Constantinople had wanted it. [PL 54: 1082–4]

Relentlessly, Leo pursued the struggle for orthodoxy. Writing to Marcian on April 15, 454, he praised the emperor’s faith and promised renewed favor for Anatolius, if only Anatolius would show sincere repentance. Leo also asked that Eutyches be exiled to a more distant place. [PL 54: 1094–6]

On May 29, 454 Leo wrote to Marcian and Anatolius. Leo was pleased at the deposition of Andrew and the restoration of Aetius, but he wanted Anatolius to show more zeal on behalf of orthodoxy. [PL 54: 1096–1101]

On September 4, 454, Leo also congratulated Juvenal for his recent restoration to the see of Jerusalem. The recent heresies against the Incarnation could be refuted from the pages of both the Old and New Testaments, Leo declared. For that matter, the inhabitants of Jerusalem could learn the truth not only from Scripture, but from their very surroundings, where Christ had suffered for us in the flesh. [PL 54: 1103–07]

Pope Leo kept up the good fight, urging Marcian, Anatolius and Julian of Cos to continue collaborating in the struggle for orthodoxy. By early 457, however, a major figure in this struggle was gone. Marcian, who had called for the great Council of Chalcedon, was dead.

Appendix I. Councils, Canons and the Popes.

About 305 or 306, Meletius [or Melitius], bishop of Lycopolis, had challenged the authority of Peter, bishop of Alexandria, by performing illicit ordinations in Egypt. St. Athanasius, who was aware of this disturbance, known as the “Meletian schism,” commented on it in these words:

[Archbishop Peter of Alexandria] in a synodical assembly deposed Melitius, who had been proven guilty of many offenses, and of sacrificing to idols. But Melitius did not appeal to another synod, nor did he try to defend himself; but he caused a schism, and to this day his followers call themselves Melitians instead of Christians. Before long he began to spread invectives against the bishops, first against Peter, and later against Achillas and Alexander... Since the time of Blessed Peter, bishop and martyr, [the Melitians] have been schismatics and enemies of the Church: they injured Bishop Peter, wrongfully accused Achillas his successor, and accused Bishop Alexander to the Emperor. [*Apol.*, 59, 11. PG 25: 268, 356]

In the eighteenth century, Scipio Maffei discovered documents that shed additional light on the Meletian schism, including a letter from four Egyptian bishops imprisoned for their faith: Hesychius, Pachomius, Theodorus and Phileas. The bishops express dismay that Meletius had been ordaining clergy outside of his own diocese, and without the permission of Peter, bishop of Alexandria. The letter even adds that Meletius met a certain Arius, who had “the appearance of piety” and “desired to be a teacher,” and ordained him (to the diaconate). [PG 10: 1565–8]

Faced with the double menace of Arianism and Meletianism, the bishops at Nicea addressed both issues at the council. Their synodal letter to the Alexandrian Church expressly mentions the schism of Meletius. [Theodoret, HE I, 8. PG 82: 928–32]

Addressing the situation of the Alexandrian Church, canon 6 of the Council of Nicea decrees:

Let the ancient customs prevail in Egypt, Libya and the Pentapolis, that the bishop of Alexandria shall have authority over all these, for a similar custom exists with the bishop of Rome... [Mansi 2: 669–72]

Canon 6 confirms the extensive authority of the bishop of Alexandria *because a similar custom exists with the bishop of Rome*; in other words, the authority exercised by the bishop of Rome, in accordance with “ancient customs,” is invoked to reaffirm the traditional jurisdiction of Alexandria over Egypt, Libya and the Pentapolis. In later times, this sort of authority came to be called “patriarchal.”

Certain ancient Latin versions of the canons contain the introductory phrase: *Ecclesia Romana semper habuit primatum*— “The Roman Church always had the primacy”; this phrase was even cited by a papal legate at the Council of Chalcedon.

In the ancient *Prisca* version of the canons, canon 6 of Nicea is listed under the title, “*On the Primacy of the Roman Church*.” The compiler, speaking of the canons of Nicea, remarks that “it was agreeable that all these be sent to Silvester, bishop of Rome...” [PL 56: 758–9]

Canon 28 of Chalcedon

In the sixteenth session, when most of the bishops had left, Anatolius had engineered the promulgation of canon 28, over the protests of the Roman legates. Pope Leo, “by the authority of Blessed Peter,” later pronounced it “utterly null and void by an all-embracing definition.” Anatolius had written to Leo that “the whole force and confirmation of the acts [i.e. canon 28] had been reserved for the authority of Your Blessedness.”

Originally what we call “canon 28” of Chalcedon was not listed with the other disciplinary canons of that council; certain ancient collections list only 27 canons of Chalcedon. For example, the *Hispana* or Spanish collection of canons, and the *Codex Lucensis* include twenty-seven canons of Chalcedon. [Mansi 6: 1169; 7: 380 sq.; PL 84: 172]

In the critical edition of the ecumenical councils edited by E. Schwartz, the Latin collections contain 27 canons of Chalcedon. [ACO II, Vol. 2, Pt. 2]

In 1973, Syriac specialist Arthur Voobus edited and translated the collection of canons of the Jacobite or West Syrian church, which rejects the Council of Chalcedon. The collection edited by Voobus, entitled *The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition*, lists only twenty-seven canons of Chalcedon. [CSCO 368 (Syr. 162), 138]

Remarks of Sixth-Century Byzantine Writers

In the early sixth century Theodore Lector noted that “Marcian and Pulcheria wrote to Leo, Pope of Rome,” assigning “all authority” to him, and that Leo wrote a “marvelous letter” to the council of Chalcedon, which was inserted into the acts. In the council, Theodore added, “many necessary teachings and acts were decreed,” including “the exposition of twenty-seven canons.” [HE I, 3-4. PG 86: 168]

The priest John Scholasticus of Antioch, who became bishop of Constantinople [565-577], wrote a Nomocanon called *Synagoga L Titulorum*, that cites twenty-seven canons of Chalcedon. Similarly the 14th century Egyptian priest Joseph, who wrote a paraphrase of the canons of ecumenical councils, listed twenty-seven canons of Chalcedon. [Beveridge, *Synodicon sive Pandectae Canonum*, Oxford 1672, 1: 726]

Certain Syriac manuscripts list twenty-seven canons of Chalcedon, for example British Museum Add. 14, 528 dated 501 A.D. and Add. 14, 526 estimated to date from the seventh century. [W. Wright. *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts of the British Museum*. Longmans 1871: 1031, 1035]

On the other hand, canon 28 did appear in the sixth or seventh century *Syntagma in fourteen titles*, and was included among the canons of the Council of Trullo in 692— one of the principal reasons why the popes objected to that council.

The Slavonic Nomocanon

Both the eastern and western Churches venerate Cyril and

Keys Over the Christian World

Methodius, the monks who became missionaries to the Slavs in the late ninth century. Methodius, or his disciples, composed a Slavonic Nomocanon. A Nomocanon is an authoritative canonical collection intended to express the legal tradition of an eastern church.

In the last century, A. Pavlov, a Russian Orthodox writer, discovered, on a twelfth century Slavonic manuscript, a text from the Slavonic Nomocanon which mentions canon 28. In 1897 Pavlov published the text, which reads:

...this decree was not accepted by the blessed Pope Leo... It is not true, as this canon says, that the holy Fathers gave the primacy to Old Rome because it was capital of the Empire; it is rather from on high, from divine grace, that this primacy originated. Because of the degree of his faith, Peter, highest of the apostles, heard these words from our Lord Jesus Christ himself: "Peter, lovest thou me? Feed my sheep." *That is why Rome holds the pre-eminent place and first See among hierarchs. This is why the privileges of Old Rome are eternally immovable.* Because her bishop presides over all the churches, he is not bound to go to all the holy ecumenical councils; but without his participation, manifested by sending legates, no ecumenical council exists, *for it is he who presides in the council.* If anybody wishes to deny the truth of what we say, let him refer to the most holy pope Leo's letters to Marcian and to Pulcheria of blessed memory, and also what he wrote to the above-mentioned bishop of Constantinople [Anatolius], and he will be convinced that this really is the case. [*Vizantiiskii Vremennik* 4 (1897), 150-2. Tr. DTC 13: 364]

Appendix II. Nestorius, Monophysite Writers, and the Popes

Condemned at the Council of Ephesus in 431, Nestorius claimed to have been vindicated twenty years later, when Leo the Great and Flavian of Constantinople proclaimed the doctrine of two natures in Christ. Nestorius wrote an apology called *The Bazaar of Heraclides*. The obscure

title served to camouflage the work, preserving it where orthodox hands might have burned or destroyed it. *The Bazaar of Heraclides* was lost for centuries, but was rediscovered a little over a century ago. A French version, entitled *Le Livre d'Heraclide de Damas*, was published by F. Nau at Paris in 1910.

Convinced that he had been unfairly treated by Cyril, “the Egyptian” who had supposedly prejudiced the Bishop of Rome against him, Nestorius criticized the party of Dioscorus, which loved to invoke Cyril’s memory. Commenting on the Robber Council of Ephesus [449], Nestorius remarked: “The bishop of Rome was not there, nor the see of St. Peter, nor the apostolic honor, nor the head dear to the Romans.” [Ed. Nau, 302]

Commenting about the behavior of Dioscorus, Nestorius wrote:

[The bishop of Alexandria] did the questioning as the one having authority, and even spoke as if he were the one passing sentence... [Dioscorus] wanted to teach everyone not to turn to the bishop of Rome, since he [the Roman bishop] was unable to help that of Constantinople. [Nau, 302-3]

Nestorius censured Dioscorus for having ignored the instructions which Rome had sent to Constantinople:

For you [Dioscorus] knew, in fact, you knew exactly what [Pope Leo] had sent to the emperor and empress and Flavian himself in this regard, and on the contrary you took the road leading towards the emperor so as to follow it, abandoning the one that leads to God, without showing much concern about it. But I have not said enough: you counted this as nothing and you have spurned God. [Nau, 303]

Finally, Nestorius maintained that Dioscorus should have respected Leo’s judgment in the case of Eutyches:

This case had moreover been examined long ago, and the matter had been judged. What judgment or what other examination was more qualified than the one pronounced by the bishop of Rome? For when he was informed of what had been done by both parties, he praised the one and condemned the other by divine inspiration, because it was not in ignorance that he condemned them. Because [the Eutychians] felt qualms about the bishop of Rome, they turned to the bishop of Alexandria as to one who was inclined to take their side, and was the enemy of the bishop of Constantinople. [Nau, 302]

“The faithful Leo, head of the priests...”

Nestorius even affirmed Leo’s headship of the hierarchy: “As for what has been done now by the faithful Leo, *head of the priests*, who fought for piety...” [Nau, 373–4]

Nestorius also complained about the role of St. Celestine, who had not even been present at the Council of Ephesus. Depicting himself as a victim of prejudice, Nestorius claimed to have the same faith as Leo and Flavian. Praising Leo as “a herald free of this prejudice, who proclaimed the truth without fear,” Nestorius saw in the death of Celestine an act of Divine Providence:

[God] ...withdrew from this world the bishop of Rome [Celestine], he who had had the principal role against me at the Council of Ephesus, and He approved and confirmed [through Leo] what had been done by the bishop of Constantinople... [Nau, 327]

Monophysite Writers

Nestorius had presented himself as an ally of Leo and Flavian against Dioscorus. Speaking of Dioscorus, he had a disciple, the deacon Theopistus, to whom is attributed, from the opposite perspective, a *History of Dioscorus*,

Patriarch of Alexandria. The text is an unabashed panegyric of Dioscorus, who is depicted as a saint and martyr for truth. F. Nau published a French version of it in 1903, entitled *Histoire de Dioscore, Patriarche d'Alexandrie*. The text appeared in *Journal Asiatique*, March–April 1903.

Describing a letter from Pope Leo to Emperor Marcian, Theopistus wrote: “Leo, who was made to sit *upon the illustrious throne of Peter, head of the apostles*, wrote to Emperor Marcian...” [Nau, 252]

A little later, Theopistus describes how his hero, Dioscorus, wrote a letter to Marcian which was violently critical of Pope Leo. The text is candid enough to record Marcian’s reaction, which according to Theopistus was as follows:

See how Dioscorus wants to impose on me by his letters: *is Mark greater than Peter, and shall we listen to the lesser see and not the higher one?* [Nau, 254]

Marcian to Dioscorus: “I esteem Pope Leo more than you”

Theopistus also recorded an argument between Emperor Marcian and Dioscorus, at the beginning of the Council of Chalcedon. According to Theopistus, the exchange went:

MARCIAN. “I have called Your Holinesses together so that you may come to establish the faith and restore it.”

DIOSCORUS. “What is lacking to the faith of our holy fathers, that we should add anything to it?”

MARCIAN. “Am I a bishop like you, so as to know your affairs?”

DIOSCORUS. “If you are not a bishop, leave us (to dispute) with these heretics, and we shall follow him who will appear to have the victory.”

MARCIAN. “But Leo is the first of the archbishops, *you are resisting*

Keys Over the Christian World

him who is greater than you.”

DIOSCORUS. “The first of God’s creation is Satan, the enemy of the good, and as he fell into error, he was cast out and rejected from glory.”

MARCIAN. “When I say a word, you come back with two; *however, I esteem Pope Leo more than you.*”

DIOSCORUS. “Do you receive any of the archbishops of Rome besides this blasphemer [sic] Leo, who is the least of them all?”

MARCIAN. “I receive Celestine and all his colleagues.”

Dioscorus even invoked two previous Roman bishops, Liberius and Innocent I, in favor of his position. [Nau, 263–4]

Bishops to Pope Leo: “How can Dioscorus do such things...?”

Severus Mucaffa, Coptic bishop of Ashmunein [c. 950 A.D.], wrote a *History of the Councils* from the monophysite point of view. Commenting on the Second Council of Ephesus in 449, which Pope Leo had stigmatized as the “Robber Council,” Severus writes:

...many of those who had been excommunicated by Dioscorus went to complain to [Pope] Leo. They accused Dioscorus, patriarch of Alexandria, of having convoked a synod “without reserving a place for you, without asking for you to come, without consulting you about what should have been done, and of having excommunicated the patriarch of Constantinople and themselves, and this of his own authority, *whereas you are the supreme father, patriarch of the great city of Rome, successor of Boutros [Peter], prince of the apostles. How can Dioscorus do such things while you are alive?*” [PO 3: 170]

In a parallel passage from his *History of the Councils*, Severus depicts

the bishops excommunicated by Dioscorus as addressing [Pope] Leo in this manner: “Dioscorus has had the presumption to hold a council and establish canons *without consent from you, who hold the see of the apostle and who are, by your rank, the first Father among the bishops.*” [PO 6:514]

Two centuries after Severus Mucaffa, a monophysite patriarch, Michael the Syrian [1166–1199], discussed the events leading up to the Council of Chalcedon. Michael depicts Pope Leo as complaining to the imperial family that “In your time the apostolic throne has been despised; the apostolic canons have been trampled underfoot because of the [Second] Council of Ephesus,” under Dioscorus. [*Chronicle*, BkVIII, 8]

Michael complained that Marcian convoked the Council of Chalcedon “at the instigation of Leo,” and that the bishops either had to sign the Tome or be deposed. [BkVIII, 10. Ed. Chabot, 2: 38, 48]

Michael the Syrian also preserved parts of a treatise by John Philiponos, a sixth century monophysite theologian. Philiponos had tried to refute arguments for the Roman primacy, writing:

What ecclesiastical canon, what imperial law has given the bishop of Rome such power that he can do what he wants, legitimately promulgate a decree outside of a synod, act illegally, and do what he pleases even when nobody agrees with him? Only tyrants act this way. If they put forward the apostolic authority of Peter, and if they believe that the keys of the kingdom of heaven have been given to them, let them consider the other cities that have been graced with the apostolic halo... Why do not the Antiochians claim the precedence for themselves, in the first place because Peter, on whom the Romans base their great claim, first exercised his authority there...? Because [the bishop of Rome] alone had authority in the imperial city, he obtained the precedence over all others by a certain usage, because of the greatness of the city and the imperial authority. But no ecclesiastical canon has instituted, nor has any imperial law established the bishop of Rome as autocrat of the whole world... It

Keys Over the Christian World

is not in the power of the bishop of Rome to make a synod, but in the power of the emperors... Who then has allowed your Leo to judge alone regarding ecclesiastical disagreements? [Chronicle, Bk VIII, 13. Ed. Chabot, 2: 101-2]

Chapter XII

Riots in the Churches

After Dioscorus was condemned and sent into exile, the archpriest Proterius was elected as the new bishop of Alexandria. When Proterius tried to take possession of his see, however, a riot broke out in the city. Byzantine soldiers were stoned and some were even burned alive; Marcian was forced to send reinforcements to Alexandria. [Liberatus, *Breviarium*, 14. Evagrius, HE II, 5]

On March 10, 454 Pope Leo had written to Proterius, urging him to observe the norm of antiquity both for the rule of faith and for ecclesiastical discipline. In particular, Leo elaborated, the rights of metropolitans had to be respected— yet another reference to canon 28. [PL 54: 1075-8]

At the same time, Leo had written to Marcian praising the faith of Proterius, and asking for a new, accurate translation of the Tome to Flavian, to be read publicly to the people of Alexandria. Leo had delegated the task of translation to Julian of Cos, his representative in the east. [PL 54: 1078-82]

Proterius had held a council at Alexandria and condemned a vocal opponent of the Council of Chalcedon, the priest Timothy Elurus, known as “the Cat.” Nevertheless, when Emperor Marcion died in 457, Timothy was consecrated by two like-minded prelates, Eusebius of Pelusium and Peter of Maiuma. During Holy Week an angry mob rushed upon Proterius in the baptistery of the church of Cyrinus, and murdered him. His body was exposed at the Tetrapyle, led on a camel to the hippodrome, and finally burned. [PG 86, 2520. Ps. Zachary-Rhetor, HE IV, 2]

There were also disturbances in Palestine, where the bishop, Juvenal, was driven from his see. On June 11, 457, Pope Leo wrote the new emperor, Leo I, asking that a Catholic bishop be chosen for Alexandria. The decrees of the Council of Chalcedon, the pope pointed out, were not open to revision, and he sent similar letters to Anatolius and Julian of Cos. On September 1, Pope Leo wrote to the emperor again, thanking him for having proclaimed himself the “guardian” of the Council of Chalcedon, and asking him to continue the struggle against heresy. [PL 54: 1113-18]

At the same time, Pope Leo wrote to the bishops of several major eastern sees, including Antioch, Jerusalem, Thessalonica and Corinth, making it clear that the dogmatic decrees of Chalcedon could not be retracted; it was not possible to call a new council for that purpose, as some were requesting. Leo instructed Julian of Cos, and Aetius, the former archdeacon of Constantinople who was now a priest, to insure that the letters reached the eastern metropolitans. [PL 54: 1119-24]

Not everybody at Egypt had followed Dioscorus. A certain number of Egyptian bishops had been exiled for the faith. In a letter of October 11, 457, Leo consoled them and urged them to stand fast for the faith of Chalcedon. He also wrote to Anatolius, urging him to be more vigilant against heretical machinations, and to avoid any connivance with heretics. [PL 54: 1124-28]

On December 1, 457, Pope Leo wrote to the emperor again, pointing out that because the Church’s traditional faith is built upon the biblical Rock, the dogmatic decrees of Chalcedon are irreformable:

Since therefore the Universal Church has become a rock by having been built upon that principal Rock, and the most blessed Peter, first of the apostles, heard from the Lord’s voice: *Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church*, who but Antichrist, or the devil, would dare to knock against that indestructible firmness?

Evoking the lamentable state of the Alexandrian Church, where the offering

of sacrifice and the sanctification of chrism had been interrupted, the pope declared it unthinkable that the murderers of Proterius preside over it. The Church of Alexandria had always been a house of prayer, he reminded the emperor— let it not become a den of thieves! The pope also wrote to Anatolius of Constantinople and the exiled Egyptian bishops, in defense of the traditional faith. [PL 54: 1127–32]

Leo continued to write to the exiled Egyptians, the clergy of Constantinople, to Anatolius and the emperor himself. The pope announced that he was sending legates into the east once again. [PL 54: 1140 sq.]

On August 17, 458 Pope Leo sent the emperor a lengthy defense of the Church's teaching about the Incarnation, and the reality of Christ's two natures and their properties. From these principles, the pope showed, the Church must condemn *both* the Eutychian and Nestorian heresies. The letter contained lengthy excerpts from the Latin and Greek fathers in defense of the Church's doctrine. [PL 54: 1155–90]

The Codex Encyclius

Pope Leo had taught that the dogmatic teaching of Chalcedon could not be changed, revised, or amended at a new council. That was theological reality. Emperor Leo, however, was looking at *political* reality. In 458, he asked the bishops of his empire to answer two questions: should the Council of Chalcedon be retained, and should Timothy the Cat remain as bishop of Alexandria?

The answers of the synods of bishops were preserved in a document known as the *Codex Encyclius*. The bishops were almost unanimous in upholding the council, whereas Timothy the Cat met with equally universal condemnation. The bishops of Second Moesia defended the Council of Chalcedon, writing, "...in the city of Chalcedon, many holy bishops [had come] together by the command of Leo, bishop of Rome, who is truly the head of bishops..." [ACO IV, Vol. 5, 32]

The bishops of the province Europe defended not only Chalcedon, but the Council of Ephesus, “which was gathered under Celestine of blessed memory, successor of the holy and venerable keeper of the keys of heaven, Peter...” [ACO IV, Vol. 5, 27]

The bishops of Second Armenia defended the Council of Ephesus, and “Celestine of blessed memory, successor of the see and the mind of Peter.” [ACO IV, Vol. 5, 73]

The Struggle for Orthodoxy at Alexandria

Pope Leo had also condemned Timothy the Cat [457–460], and the emperor had exiled him to Gangres; the Cat was replaced at Alexandria by Timothy Salofaciolus, also known as ‘Timothy the White’ or ‘White Turban,’ who was orthodox. Pope Leo had firmly supported Timothy Salofaciolus, and announced as much to the clergy and faithful of Alexandria, and the bishop of Constantinople. [PL 54: 1212–18. Cf. DTC 6: 2154–5]

Pope Leo died in November 461. His epitaph commemorates the play on words between Leo and ‘lion,’ which his name means in Latin:

The books bear witness, which he sent,
To proclaim right teaching was his intent...
He roared, and wild beasts were struck with fear,
And the sheep their shepherd’s commands did hear.
[ICUR 2: 140]

Leo’s successor was Hilary [461–468], the deacon who had represented Rome at the Robber Council of Ephesus. Hilary had cried out, helplessly, *contradicitur*—signifying Rome’s rejection of the proceedings under Dioscorus. Then Hilary literally had had to run for his life. Hilary, a strong defender of the traditional faith, was succeeded at Rome by Pope Simplicius [468–483].

In Egypt, there was widespread revolt against the Council of Chalcedon. Relying on an expression used by St. Cyril, the anti-

Chalcedonian opposition claimed that there was ‘one incarnate nature’ in Christ. Opponents of the council came to be called monophysites, from the Greek for ‘one nature.’ Moderate monophysites did not deny that Christ was true God and true man, or that He was ‘of’ two natures, but they denied adamantly that He had two natures “after the union,” the Incarnation.

Monophysitism continued spreading in the east, and gained another victory about 470, when the priest Peter the Fuller took over the see of Antioch. At Constantinople, when Leo I died in 474, the throne fell to Zeno the Isaurian, who was soon overthrown by the usurper Basiliskos, a strong supporter of the monophysites. [Evagrius, HE II, 11]

Basiliskos wasted no time giving aid and comfort to the monophysites. At Alexandria, he restored Timothy the Cat, who was also known as *the Parricide*, because he had become patriarch over the dead body of the martyred Proterius. Timothy, who had sat it out in exile for years, awaiting such an opportunity, went to Constantinople with Peter the Fuller. After the heretic patriarchs had met with the emperor, Basiliskos promulgated an *Encyclical* ordering the Council of Chalcedon and the Tome of Leo to be anathematized and burned. Led by Timothy the Cat and Peter the Fuller, as many as *five hundred* bishops signed the decree of Basiliskos. [Evagrius, HE III, 4-5]

“Acacius, Disturber of the Eastern Church...”

At Constantinople there was a new bishop, Acacius [471-489]. Alerted by the orthodox clergy and monks of Constantinople, Pope Simplicius wrote to him in January 476. Solemnly reminding Acacius about “the doctrine of our predecessors of holy memory, against which it is illicit to dispute,” Simplicius deplored the unjust expulsion of the bishop of Alexandria. [CSEL 35: 131]

The pope also wrote to the emperor, Basiliskos:

I neither can nor ought to be silent... Before anything else, I ask that the see of Blessed Mark the evangelist— meaning the

Alexandrian church— be delivered from an utterly cruel predator’s invasion, that it be restored to a Catholic bishop, and thus recover its liberty and tranquillity... *for the norm of sound doctrine persists in the successor of him to whom the Lord enjoined the care of the entire flock, with whom he promised to be present even to the end of time, against whom he promised that the gates of hell would never prevail, and testified that whatever was bound by his sentence on earth could not be loosed even in heaven.* [CSEL 35: 127–8]

The pope struck a similar note in another letter to the emperor: what we preached recently, he says, was done “through the blessed apostle Peter teaching us.” [CSEL 35: 137]

Pope Simplicius wrote to the orthodox clergy and archimandrites of Constantinople, assuring them that the faith could not change. Both Nestorianism and Eutychianism had been “condemned many times by the authority of the Apostolic See and of the ecumenical council.” The faith of Chalcedon must stand, as “the bishops of the entire east intimated in writing to Leo, who was then emperor”— a reference to the *Codex Encyclius* of 458. [CSEL 35: 133–4]

Encouraged by the pope, Acacius, who had a flair for flamboyant gestures, resisted Basiliskos, invoking the help of St. Daniel the Stylite, who lived over a huge pillar. Acacius added another colorful protest gesture: as a sign of mourning he dressed in black vestments, and covered his patriarchal throne and altar with black veils. When the news broke that Basiliskos wanted to make Acacius promulgate the heretical *Encyclical*, masses of people from all walks of life, including the elderly and children, stormed the patriarchal church to prevent this. [Theodore Lector, HE I, 32. PG 86, 182. Theophanes A.C. 467–469. PG 108: 304–08]

Stung by the resistance to his *Encyclical*, Basiliskos withdrew it and published a *Counter-Encyclical* in 477, anathematizing Nestorius, Eutyches and all other heretics, prohibiting any new council or examination of the faith, and restoring to Constantinople the patriarchal rights he had granted

to Ephesus, but it was too late. Basiliskos was overthrown by Zeno, and fled for asylum; Basiliskos and his wife and children were banished to Cucusus in Cappadocia, where they were murdered. [Evagrius, HE III, 7-8. Theophanes, A.C. 469]

Zeno, who appeared to have learned his lesson, built a church for St. Thecla at Seleucia of Isauria, and sent a profession of faith to Pope St. Simplicius, promising to uphold Chalcedon and stop the machinations of the heretics. [Mansi 7: 980-82. Evagrius, HE III, 8]

Meanwhile at Alexandria, when Timothy the Cat died, the anti-Chalcedonians chose archdeacon Peter Mongus as his successor. Zeno passed a death sentence on Mongus, and restored as bishop Timothy Salofaciolus, who wrote to Pope Simplicius, pointing out that Peter Mongus, while still a deacon, had been condemned. Timothy also wrote to the emperor, asking him to send Mongus into a more distant exile. [Liberatus, *Breviarium*, 16. PL 68: 1020. Evagrius, HE III, 11]

Informed of these events by Acacius, Pope Simplicius replied in letters of March 13 and October 17, 478. Like St. Paul, Simplicius was conscious of bearing the "solicitude of all the churches." He urged Acacius to obtain from Zeno a general law banishing heretics, especially Mongus. The pope did not want prelates to loiter at Constantinople, either; they needed to tend their flocks. As for the faithful who had compromised with heresy out of fear, St. Simplicius remarked:

That our joy may be perfect, our brother and fellow bishop Timothy [Salofaciolus] has also sent us a *libellus* of satisfaction from those whom Timothy [the Cat] and Peter [the Fuller], who were both condemned, led astray from the truth of the Catholic faith, under terror of condemnation. They ask for pardon [and Timothy Salofaciolus] desires us to assist the fallen with priestly mercy, which, in view of the divine mercy which wants nobody to perish, we do not think can be refused. [CSEL 35: 144]

Keys Over the Christian World

Meanwhile the bishops of Asia wrote to Acacius, offering excuses for having signed the heretical *Encyclical* of Basiliskos: they had gone against their better judgment, they pleaded— in reality they were attached to Chalcedon. [Evagrius, HE III, 9]

According to Evagrius, the return of Zeno was also the occasion for the expulsion of Peter the Fuller from the see of Antioch. The menace of heresy was not to be underestimated; by 479, Patriarch Stephen II had been murdered by a mob and Acacius had consecrated a new patriarch named Calendion. [HE III, 10]

By ordaining a patriarch for Antioch, Acacius was technically in violation of the canons of Nicea. On June 22, 479, Pope Simplicius addressed the issue, writing to Zeno:

If what I had written to my colleague Acacius about Peter Mongus and the other heretics had been obeyed, there would not have been such crimes to punish. Indeed I had directed that you be asked to banish from the borders of your empire all who had usurped the Churches on the occasion of the tyrant's [Basiliskos'] domination... If any of them are still left, drive them out into foreign countries. [CSEL 35: 147-8]

On the consecration of a bishop for Antioch, the pope remarked:

...because you believed that you could calm the sedition at Antioch only by ordaining a bishop at Constantinople [contrary to the prescription of the Council of Nicea], *the apostle Peter accepts your promise and your oath, on the condition that in the future the bishop of Antioch's ordination is reserved to the synod of the east*, so that what my brother Acacius has done... may not be turned into a custom... [CSEL 35: 148-9]

At Alexandria, the crisis intensified when the orthodox patriarch,

Timothy Salofaciolus, died about 481–482. The orthodox elected the monk John Talaia, or John the Tabennesian, as his successor. John had been treasurer of the church of Alexandria and had an excellent reputation. However, according to the chronicler Liberatus, Talaia declined to send synodical letters to Acacius, at Constantinople; instead, Talaia tried to deal with the emperor through a friend at Court named Illus or Ellus. [*Breviarium*, 17. PL 68: 1022]

According to Liberatus, Acacius felt snubbed, turned on John Talaia, and went before the emperor, accusing Talaia of trying to leave the Church while Timothy Salofaciolus was still alive, and of persuading Timothy to restore the name of *Dioscorus* to the diptychs. Talaia was also accused of “perjury”—of violating an oath not to become bishop. Acacius began to support Peter Mongus, claiming that Mongus was capable of uniting the Alexandrian Church. [PL 68: 1022]

The charges against Talaia were highly partisan. Evagrius follows Zachary the Rhetor’s account, which depicts John as a perjurer. [HE III, 12] On the other hand, Theophanes the Chronographer considered Talaia worthy of the patriarchal dignity, and a defender of orthodoxy. [PG 108: 316–17] The chronicler Liberatus presents the charges against Talaia as the result of intrigues by Acacius. [PL 68: 1022]

As for Timothy Salofaciolus restoring Dioscorus to the diptychs, Pope Simplicius mentioned the incident in certain letters. According to Simplicius, Timothy had acted under duress—“*perterritus*”—and later sent an embassy to Rome, asking pardon. The pope did not say if John Talaia had had any complicity in the incident. [Epp. 9, 11. Thiel, 195, 198]

Meanwhile, Acacius lobbied before Zeno on behalf of Peter Mongus, claiming that Mongus was the man the people of Alexandria wanted as patriarch. Mongus had the capability of *uniting the two groups struggling for control of the Alexandrian Church*—supporters of Chalcedon, and monophysite heretics. Perhaps with a little coaching from Acacius, Mongus offered to bring about this “union.” [Liberatus, PL 68: 1022]

A Plan to Unite the Empire?

Zeno had an empire to run, but riots and disturbances were making it impossible to govern. To hold the empire together, it was *essential* to bring Catholics and monophysites together. If Mongus could do that, so be it. Pope Simplicius, who was planning to confirm John Talaia as bishop of Alexandria, received an imperial letter criticizing Talaia as a perjurer, and recommending Peter Mongus for the see. Concerned by the accusation against Talaia, Pope Simplicius replied, “I have revoked my sentence about his confirmation.” [CSEL 35: 152]

To confirm Peter Mongus, however, was out of the question. Mongus, the pope declared,

...was the accomplice and even leader of the heretics, and I have asked many times that he be driven from Alexandria. The promise he is now making to profess the true faith may well allow him to return to the communion of the faithful, but does not allow him to be raised to the high priestly dignity, lest under the guise of a feigned abjuration he may have the freedom to teach error. [Thiel, 212]

On November 6, 482 the pope wrote again to Acacius, concerned about the Alexandrian Church: “My thoughts give me no rest, nor does the case allow us to rest, which, if we abandon it, makes us inexcusable before Christ our Lord, whose interests are at stake...” [Thiel, 213]

Meanwhile, in complicity with Peter Mongus, the emperor and patriarch were working on a scheme to unify the churches. The cornerstone of this plan was an imperial decree, the *Henoticon* or “edict of union” of the churches. This edict, which was composed as a letter to the clergy and faithful of the vast patriarchate of Alexandria, was preserved by the historian Evagrius. [HE III, 14]

The *Henoticon* sought to unite as many Christians as possible, on this basis:

1. Recognition of the first three ecumenical councils:

...we, as well as the churches everywhere, have not had, do not have, and shall never have another Creed, or teaching, or faith, or definition of faith than the Creed of the 318 Fathers (of Nicea), confirmed by the 150 (of Constantinople), and we do not recognize those who have any other...This is also the rule of faith followed by the holy Fathers who met at Ephesus (and) deposed the impious Nestorius... [PG 86: 2621-3]

2. Anathema against Nestorius and Eutyches. The *Henoticon* continues:“We too anathematize this Nestorius, and Eutyches, for having had sentiments contrary to what we have said...” [PG 86: 2623]

3.The anathematisms composed by Cyril.The *Henoticon* adds:“*We also receive the twelve chapters of Cyril, of holy memory, who was archbishop of the holy Catholic church of Alexandria...*” [PG 86: 2623]

4. On the divinity and humanity of Christ, the *Henoticon* continues:

We confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God and (himself) God, who became incarnate in truth, (is) consubstantial with the Father according to his divinity and consubstantial with us according to his humanity... [PG 86: 2623]

5. On the subject of Chalcedon, the *Henoticon* has this clause:

Whoever has believed or believes anything else, whether at Chalcedon or at any other council, we anathematize, but principally Nestorius and Eutyches with their supporters... [PG 86: 2623]

This clause reveals Zeno’s real intentions.The *Henoticon* was meant to *bury* the definition of Chalcedon and replace it with an ambiguous one designed to please the monophysites,keep them in union with the orthodox,

Keys Over the Christian World

and keep the empire running smoothly. Zeno was trying to keep both Catholics and monophysites on the reservation. If that meant sacrificing the Council of Chalcedon, so be it. Yet Chalcedon was the council where *Peter spoke through Leo*. In the decades to come, Peter, who had spoken through a Roman Pontiff, proved to be remarkably unwilling to keep quiet.

Chapter XIII

The Lockout of Heresy

Zeno had published his “Decree of Union,” and now he was ready to enforce it. Acacius and Peter Mongus were first to sign the *Henoticon*. According to the chronicler Liberatus, the decree was brought to Alexandria by legates of Mongus, who had imperial letters ordering the duke of Egypt to drive out John Talaia. Mongus returned to Alexandria, anathematized the Council of Chalcedon and the Tome of Leo, erased from the diptychs the names of the Catholic bishops, Proterius and Timothy the White, and replaced them with the names of Dioscorus and Timothy the Cat. [PL 68: 1026-7]

Liberatus reports that when John Talaia was expelled from his see, he went to Antioch and conferred with the patriarch, Calendion, who had his own heretical rival in Peter the Fuller. Liberatus adds that after receiving “synodical letters of intercession” from Calendion, Talaia “appealed to the Roman pontiff Simplicius, as Blessed Athanasius did.” Pope Simplicius promptly wrote to Acacius, whose reply did not recognize John Talaia as bishop of Alexandria; Acacius also claimed to have received Peter Mongus into communion by virtue of Zeno’s *Henoticon*, so as to obey imperial orders. [PL 68: 1026]

Pope Simplicius died in 483. His epitaph reads:

He who handed over the keys of the kingdom,
and care of the flock,
who entrusted the handles of heaven and earth to Peter,
to open unto those shut out,
and loosen those bound in fetters,
now gave it to Simplicius,

to hold the sacred rights...

[Diehl, *Inscriptiones Latinae Christianae Veteres*, 1: 184]

When a new pope, Felix III [483–492], succeeded St. Simplicius, John Talaia urged him to depose Acacius, who was in communion with Peter Mongus. The pope sent legates to Constantinople—bishops Vitalis of Tronton in Picenum and Misenus of Cuma in Campania—with letters for Acacius and Zeno, and a mission: to convince the emperor to drive Peter Mongus out of Alexandria and to summon Acacius to defend himself, before a Roman council, against the accusations of John Talaia. [Evagrius, HE III, 18]

The pope had already heard from the orthodox faithful of the east, and from several bishops, including Nestor of Tarsus, Cyrus of Hierapolis, John of Cyrus, Romanus [of Chalcedis?], Eusebius of Samosata, Julian of Mopsuestia, Paul of Constantine, Manes of Himera, and Andrew of Theodosiopolis. Zeno had driven them from their churches, allegedly for favoring the tyrants Leontius and Illus, but in reality because of the *Henoticon*. The Byzantine chronicler Theophanes adds that these bishops contacted [Pope] Felix after the death of Simplicius, declaring that the individual really responsible for all the evils was... Acacius. [A.C. 478–482. PG 108: 321–5]

The chronicler Liberatus wrote that “whereas for five years Acacius often had been admonished to refresh the holy pope’s solicitude regarding the status of the Church of Alexandria, he never deigned to give any response...” [Breviarium, 18. PL 68: 1028]

Victor of Tunnunum, another African chronicler, notes that Acacius had been admonished by St. Felix to avoid the communion of bishops who condemned the Council of Chalcedon. [PL 68: 947]

Writing to the emperor, St. Felix begged: “do not permit the see of Blessed Mark the evangelist to be separated from the doctrine and communion of its master... restore the disciple to the master, and bring back the see of Blessed Mark the evangelist to the communion of the most

blessed Peter.”The pope added:

Is it not my faith alone which the Lord himself has shown to be true, and not to be overcome by any adversity, who promised that the gates of hell would not prevail against the church to be founded on my confession? [Thiel, 223–4, 232]

Writing to Acacius, the pope sounded a similar note:

Among the various concerns of the universal church, which the most blessed apostle Peter, with highly vigilant rule, dispenses— by delegated authority through the Supreme Shepherd’s voice— to all Christian peoples throughout the world, the utmost solicitude took hold of me, as it haunted my predecessor, both for the city of Alexandria and for the state of the faith throughout the east... [Thiel, 232–3]

Recalling previous struggles against heresy, the pope remonstrated:

Where, brother Acacius, is that labor that once made you exert yourself in the time of heretical tyranny? Consider the Apostle’s words: “You were running well, who hath bewitched you?” Listen to the voice of the Lord forewarning you: “He who is not with me is against me...” And consider diligently, that to fail to procure the things which are Christ’s, is equivalent to professing openly to be his enemy. Thus if you see hostile hearts reaching against the decisions of the Council of Chalcedon, [and] you do not budge, believe me, I do not know how you claim to be a participant in the union of the entire Church... we protest again and again, lest suddenly things laid down for the entire Church are allowed to be revoked through the audacity of those who are planning an insurgency against the Catholic synod [Chalcedon]... we [who love you with sincere charity]

exhort you more urgently and with increasing frequency, to avoid in the future things which show that you are torn asunder from the entire household of Christ, nor must you pursue any longer things which cause you to be separated from her. [Thiel, 236-9]

The pope reminded Acacius that “the censure of the most blessed Peter, and the authority of the universal Church, never lose any of their force.” The pope also had a question for the emperor: “Why do you now allow a beast, which you had once determined to drive away, to rage against Christ’s flock?” [Thiel, 228, 237]

The “beast” was, of course, Peter Mongus, the heretic who had intruded into Alexandria. To “unify” the churches through complicity with heresy was illicit, the pope continued:

Your piety is undoubtedly saddened that, owing to long-standing and serious conflicts [in Egypt], many appear to have left this world deprived of either baptism or communion... Under this bishop, are they to be made heretics so that they may not go without baptism? And, in order to keep themselves from leaving this life without communion, are they to fall away in the depravity of the reprobate, so that, as it has been written, the blind leading the blind may fall into the pit? [Thiel, 230-31]

The Roman legates proceeded to Constantinople, with directions to consult with Cyril, archimandrite of the Acemete monks. Zeno, however, wrote to Rome defending Mongus, and claiming that Talaia was a perjurer; the emperor even claimed that Mongus and all the churches accepted the “most holy Council of Chalcedon”! Meanwhile, Acemete monks were warning the pope that his legates had betrayed their mandate and recognized Mongus. [Evagrius III, 18-20. PG 86: 2633-40]

The pope knew that Zeno was not telling the truth. According to the chronicler Liberatus, after Peter Mongus anathematized the Council of

Chalcedon and the Tome of Leo, some of the faithful left Mongus, went to Rome, and informed the pope. Liberatus adds that “a reply was sent to Acacius, and he was unwilling to obey.” [PL 68: 1027]

Pope Felix had had enough. At Rome, he convoked a synod of seventy-seven bishops in July 484, renewed the condemnation of Mongus, and pronounced against Acacius—who had been informed and exhorted one more time, to no avail—this sentence:

Acacius, who after having been admonished by us for a second time has not ceased to be in contempt of the salutary statutes, and saw fit to throw me into prison in the person of my legates— him has God banished from the priesthood by a sentence pronounced from heaven above. If therefore any bishop, cleric, monk or lay person, after this denunciation, holds communion with him, let him be anathema, with the Holy Ghost enforcing it... [Thiel, 247]

The papal letter of July 28, 484, which was brought to Acacius in person, begins brusquely:

You are found guilty of many transgressions: and having often acted in contempt of the venerable Council of Nicea, you have temerarily usurped the rights of other provinces; purveyors of heresy, and men ordained by heretics, whom you yourself had condemned, and whose condemnation you obtained from the Apostolic See, you not only saw fit to receive into your communion, but further, you have, to the exclusion of others, made them preside [as bishops]—which you could not have done even if they had been Catholics—and you endowed them with honors they did not deserve... the audacity of your pride even extends against the truth of apostolic doctrine, so that Peter [Mongus], to whom you yourself had referred as having been condemned by my predecessors of holy memory, as the additional documents bear witness, should once again,

Keys Over the Christian World

with your connivance, invade the see of Blessed Mark the evangelist, and after putting to flight the orthodox bishops and clergy, ordain others undoubtedly like himself, and hold that church captive after expelling the bishop who was legitimately established there. [Thiel, 243-4]

Pope Felix wrote to the emperor on August 4, 484, complaining about the treatment of the “legation of the blessed apostle Peter,” and declaring that Peter Mongus would *never* be recognized by Rome. The pope urged Zeno to make a choice: “because you have considered our exhortation burdensome, we leave it to your judgment whether to choose the communion of Blessed Peter the apostle, or that of Peter of Alexandria...” Finally, the pope reminded the emperor that there were limits even to an emperor’s authority, and announced the sentence against Acacius. [Thiel, 247-50]

The pope wrote to the orthodox clergy and people of Constantinople, urging them to continue to fight for the truth, and adding:

Although we are aware of the zeal of your faith, we warn you none the less that all who want to be sharers in the Catholic faith must abstain from his [Acacius’] communion, lest, God forbid, they become liable to a similar punishment... [Thiel, 251-2]

In 485, a Roman synod of 43 bishops met again, to consider the case of Antioch, where the orthodox patriarch Calendion had been ejected and replaced by Peter the Fuller. On October 5, the synod wrote to the orthodox clergy and archimandrites of Constantinople: “From the beginning, the faith of your holiness has been proven to the Apostolic See, which rules over us all.” The synod offered this explanation of Roman custom and procedure:

Now, therefore... gathered before [the tomb of] the most blessed apostle Peter, again we have hastened to inform Your Love of the custom that has ever obtained among us. As

often as the bishops of the Lord gather together within Italy to deal with ecclesiastical matters, especially matters of faith, the custom is retained that the successor of the bishops of the Apostolic See establish provisions for all matters in accordance with the solicitude for all the churches which is proper to him who is the head of all, as the Lord says to Blessed Peter: ‘Thou art Peter...’ Following this saying, the 318 Fathers who met at Nicea referred the confirmation of matters to the holy Roman Church... [CSEL 35: 158-9]

The synod singled out Acacius as the principal abettor of heresy and disturber of the eastern Church:

...foreseeing that the pestilence of the Eutychian heresy, of which Acacius is defender and patron, may come again, creeping like a cancer to lay waste the members of Christ, we now anathematize him as a rotten member cut off from the body of the Church by the sentence already mentioned... After that sentence, which was pronounced against Acacius, disturber of the entire eastern Church, [we renew what was laid down] in the presence of the bishops now gathered here... [CSEL 35: 158]

The Acemete monks— whose name means the *Sleepless*, because they prayed perpetually in alternating shifts— were a thorn in Acacius’ side. Not only had they denounced him to Rome, they literally handed him the sentence of deposition. Some historians, such as the deacon Liberatus and Theophanes the chronographer, even relate that an Acemete monk pinned the sentence on Acacius, as the patriarch was about to celebrate the Divine Liturgy. [PG 108: 324; *Breviarium*, 18]

Victor of Tunnunum, a sixth century African bishop, wrote: “bishops Acacius of Constantinople, Peter [Mongus] of Alexandria, [and] Peter [the Fuller] of Antioch, enemies of the Council of Chalcedon, were condemned by Felix, bishop of the Roman Church, and the synod in Italy...” [PL 68: 947]

Keys Over the Christian World

A severe persecution ensued throughout the eastern empire, where bishops were pressured to sign the *Henoticon* and enter communion with Peter Mongus; almost all gave way out of fear. Except for a courageous remnant, the imperial east was in communion with the two heretical Peters—Peter Mongus of Alexandria and Peter the Fuller, of Antioch— thanks to Zeno and Acacius. [Theophanes, PG 108: 324]

Acacius died in 489, “under condemnation,” as Victor of Tunnunum notes. The next patriarch at Constantinople was Flavita or Fravitas, who according to Liberatus “did not consent to be enthroned without the bishop of Rome, but sent a synodical letter to Felix of Rome.” [PL 68: 947, 1029]

Fravitas, however, was playing both sides of the street: while he tried to get recognized by Rome, he also made contact with Peter Mongus of Alexandria. [Evagrius, HE III, 23]

The pope’s reply commended Fravitas for having consulted the Apostolic See, “by which, through the gift of Christ, the dignity of all bishops is solidified,” and for having written that “Blessed Peter is highest of the apostles, rock of faith and dispenser of the heavenly mystery, through the keys with which he was entrusted.” However, when the envoys from Constantinople reached Rome, before receiving “the communion of the apostle Peter,” they had to answer a question: was Fravitas willing to strike the names of Acacius and Mongus from the diptychs?

The diptychs were tablets bearing the names of the faithful, both living and dead, who were commemorated in the liturgy. To include an individual in the diptychs signified communion with that person; to strike somebody from the diptychs was tantamount to a denial of communion. Peter Mongus was a notorious heretic and Acacius was his chief accomplice. As long as Fravitas left such men on the diptychs, how could Rome possibly recognize him? Because the envoys from Constantinople were not prepared to follow Rome on this point, the pope remarked:

...therefore, we sadly postponed the granting of our communion... it is no fault of ours if, even as we embrace

the bonds of charity, the society of Peter [Mongus] of Alexandria is preferred to the fellowship of the blessed apostle Peter...

Noting that Acacius, “in spite of our frequent and regular prohibitions,” had remained in communion with heretics, the pope insisted that the sentence against him was just and necessary:

We are not stubborn, but rather we are defending the dogmas of the fathers... did not Acacius follow communion with those whom he himself, in his own letters, acknowledged to be heretics already condemned...? And Peter [Mongus] could not on any account be absolved without the consent of the Apostolic See, by whose command he was excluded... therefore let the name of Peter [Mongus] and Acacius be taken from your midst, nor may we become involved with the emissaries or letters of the condemned Peter... [Thiel, 266-9]

The pope wrote in similar terms to the emperor, “...so that, with the removal of the names [of Mongus and Acacius], through whom scandal ensued to the churches, a sincere charity might emerge,” and exhorted the emperor:

Do you think, venerable emperor, that we set forth these things without tears, and as though we were not present before the feet of Your Piety? I have been silent about these things for too long... Nor, venerable son, should you spurn my person in its supplication, or dissemble about who I am. For in me, his lowly vicar, Blessed Peter the apostle asks these things, and in him Christ himself, who does not suffer his Church to be torn apart, also asks... let there be a reliable peace between the churches, and true unity: for the faith of the fathers and the communion of Blessed Peter must be preferred to any individual whatsoever. [Thiel, 271-3]

Keys Over the Christian World

In another letter to a bishop named Vetranion, Pope Felix explained that because Acacius had persisted in communion with heretics, he was cast out by repeated excommunications on the part of the Apostolic See, which was acting to enforce the Council of Chalcedon. Thus,

...with the removal from the church of Constantinople of the name of Peter [Mongus] of Alexandria, and that of Acacius, through whom the entire storm arose, the kind emperor will, after the Lord, bring about unblemished unity of the tradition of the faith of the fathers, which never would have been stained had Acacius been willing faithfully to suggest it to the most Christian emperor... In a special manner I admonish and urge Your Love, that you shall have to render me an account in that fearful examination by Our Savior, if you are negligent in carrying out what I have delegated to you for the integrity of human salvation, [and] for the real and sincere peace of the entire Church... [Thiel, 275-7]

When Fravitas died in early 490, his successor Euphemius [490-496] accepted the Council of Chalcedon, restored the pope's name to the diptychs, and renounced the communion of Peter Mongus, who died in 490. However, Euphemius refused to strike from the diptychs the names of his predecessors, Acacius and Fravitas, who had died in schism. When Zeno died in 491, the new emperor, Anastasius [491-518], maintained the *Henoticon* and deposed Euphemius in 496.

In 492, Pope Felix III died and was succeeded by Gelasius I [492-496], who wrote a long brief to the eastern bishops justifying the condemnation of Acacius. Some had pled that Acacius had been condemned *without a synod in the east*. The pope pointed out that Saints Athanasius, John Chrysostom and Flavian had been condemned by eastern synods, yet Rome had overruled them. If Rome could ignore verdicts of eastern councils *to defend innocent bishops*, could she not *condemn guilty ones* without benefit of an eastern council? [Thiel, 288]

Others had admitted that Peter Mongus had been a heretic, but claimed that he had been “corrected.” Mongus, rehabilitated? Even the bishop of Alexandria could not allow Mongus back into the episcopate *before referring the matter to the Apostolic See*; the pope replied; *that* was clear from the example of Timothy the White, who as bishop of Alexandria had received repentant heretics back into communion, but had referred such matters to Rome for confirmation. Besides, Mongus, a heretic ordained by heretics, was never a legitimate bishop in the first place. If Acacius had received Mongus, by what law, what right was it done? “That was no part of his [Acacius’] pontificate,” the pope complained; nor “did he refer these matters to me.” Why, the pope asked, did Acacius “presume to do what I forbade, and trample on what I had enjoined?” On the other hand, the pope wrote, the Apostolic See *does* have the pontificate, or jurisdiction, to handle such exceptional cases. [Thiel, 292 sq.]

The pope also wrote to Patriarch Euphemius of Constantinople, who was not meeting Rome’s conditions for the reunion of the churches: “Now since you prefer a foreign fellowship rather than to return to the pure and unspotted fellowship of Blessed Peter, how shall we sing the canticle of the Lord in a foreign land?” Defending Rome’s right to condemn Acacius, the pope asked: “Show me: what council, in any given heresy, did not condemn, along with the originators of the error, their successors, *those who were in communion with them, and their accomplices* at one stroke?” [Thiel, 313–14]

In 493, the pope fired off a letter to the bishops of Dardania, in Illyricum. Although the Greeks did not dare profess the Eutychian heresy itself, the pope complained, nevertheless, “with pernicious fury they defend those who were in communion with such [heretics], and who were justly condemned by the Apostolic See in accordance with the decrees of the Council of Chalcedon, and who died obstinately under the same condemnation.” Gelasius warned the bishops, “if perchance the sowers of such things arrive in your regions, let them be altogether excluded, and in every respect let your unblemished communion with the see of the blessed apostle Peter remain, as it has been handed down by the fathers.” [Thiel, 337]

In 494, the bishops of Dardania replied:

We give the utmost thanks to Almighty God and to Your Beatitude, in that you have deigned to visit us with a pastoral warning and evangelical doctrine, holy lord, *apostolicus* and most blessed father of fathers. For it is our desire and wish in all things to obey your commands, and as we have received it from our fathers, to observe without blemish the commands... of the Apostolic See. [Thiel, 348]

As for Peter Mongus, Acacius and their accomplices living or dead, the bishops remarked,

...they are utterly to be avoided by us, who desire blamelessly to serve the Apostolic See, in accordance with the divine precepts and the statutes of the fathers. And if some, perhaps, by a wicked intention, which we neither believe nor wish, see fit to separate themselves from the Apostolic See, we profess that we are foreign to their fellowship. [Thiel, 349]

Pope Gelasius also wrote to an abbot, Natalis, asking him to forward Rome's instructions to bishops of neighboring provinces. The letter to the Dardanian bishops, the pope asserted, had been written pursuant to "the divinely established government of St. Peter, by which the vicars of his see are debtors to the entire church." The pope also wrote to Succonius, an African bishop who had fled the Arian persecution and landed in Constantinople, warning: "do not get mixed up in the communion of those to whom you know that Blessed Peter has refused his communion." [Thiel, 338 sq.]

In late 493 Pope Gelasius wrote to Faustus, a dignitary acting as a legate in Rome:

The canons themselves willed the appeals of the whole Church to be referred to this see's examination. From it they decreed also that no appeal whatsoever ought to be made; and thereby that it judged of the whole Church, and

itself fell under the judgment of none... *Not one but many bishops were deposed by the sole authority of the Apostolic See, Timothy of Alexandria, Peter of Antioch, Peter, Paul, John...* It is not surprising that such men blaspheme against the see of the blessed apostle Peter... the supreme judgment in the whole matter belongs to the Apostolic See, in accordance with the canons... Christ's word was not [spoken] in vain, which asserted that *the gates of hell would never prevail* against the confession of Blessed Peter the apostle... Therefore we are in no fear that the apostolic judgment be reversed, which both the voice of Christ and the tradition of the fathers, as also the authority of the canons support, so that rather it may always judge the whole Church. [Thiel, 344-8]

Writing to the emperor in 494, the pope stood his ground. There are two principal authorities, Gelasius declared, by which the world is governed: the sacred authority of pontiffs, and royal authority; episcopal authority has greater weight because bishops must give an account even for kings. While the emperor presides over the human race, even he must obey the bishops, who are in charge of divine things. The pope continued:

If it is fitting that the hearts of the faithful show submission to a universal gathering of priests rightly handling divine things, how much more should consent be given to the bishop of that see which the supreme Divinity both willed to be pre-eminent over other priests, and the universal church's subsequent piety has continually celebrated? In every Christian century, the authority of the Apostolic See has been in charge of the universal church, and is confirmed both by the series of canons of the Fathers and by a manifold tradition. [Thiel, 350-56]

St. Gelasius wrote to the bishops of Dardania on February 1, 495, defending Rome's right to enforce the decrees of Chalcedon:

The first see both confirms every synod by its authority and

guards by its continuous rule, by reason, namely, of its supremacy, which, received by the apostle Peter by the mouth of the Lord, the Church however seconding it, it both has always held, and retains... We will not pass over in silence what every church throughout the world knows, that the see of the blessed apostle Peter has the right to absolve from what has been bound by the sentence of any prelates whatsoever, in that it has the right of judging of the whole Church; neither is it lawful for anyone to pass judgment on its judgment, seeing that the canons have willed that appeals to it may be made from any part of the world, but that from it nobody be permitted to appeal. [Thiel, 395-9]

The pope reminded the Dardanians that the Apostolic See had the faculty not only to absolve individuals unjustly condemned in synods, but also to condemn the guilty even without a synod, and had frequently done so, according to the custom of the ancients. [Thiel, 400]

The notion that Christ delegated the care of all the churches to Blessed Peter, and in him, to the Apostolic See, is a recurring thought on the pen of St. Gelasius. He began a letter to Honorius, bishop of Dalmatia:

Although we are hardly able to breathe, bound as we are by constant occupations amongst the various difficulties of the time, yet for the government of the Apostolic See, dealing unceasingly with the care of all the Lord's flock, which was delegated to Blessed Peter by the voice of our own Savior... we neither can nor should dissemble such things as constrain our solicitude... [Thiel, 321]

On August 2, 494, Pope Gelasius had written to the bishops of Dardania and Illyricum:

In so far as Blessed Peter the apostle's supreme government owes the entire flock throughout the world

the care which, by Christ's delegation, it has received for the entire fold, it embraces all the churches and their rulers... [Thiel, 386]

Another letter to the bishops of Syria, attributed to Pope Gelasius, cites the "unconquered force of Roman faith," and pleads: "Come you too, most honorable ones, to what you yourselves have called the holy chair, run to the immovable rock of Peter, be counted with the apostolic choir..." [Thiel, 473]

On March 13, 495, the pope held a synod to absolve Misenus, who as papal legate had fallen into complicity with Eutychian heretics. Misenus signed a solemn retraction, "in the sight of God and of Blessed Peter the apostle, and his vicar," Pope Gelasius. Noting that *the Apostolic See, by delegation of Christ the Lord, held the principality of the entire Church*, and that Christ had given Peter a higher power of binding and loosing, the pope reinstated Misenus. The bishops and priests at the synod stood and acclaimed the pontiff eleven times:

We see thee, the Vicar of Christ!

Then they added, six times:

We see thee, the apostle Peter! [CSEL 35: 487]

In a treatise about the condemnation of Peter Mongus and Acacius, the pope spoke of a kind of mystical presence of St. Peter in the Apostolic See:

By what reasoning, or consequence, is deference given to other sees if the ancient and old reverence is not given to the first see of the most Blessed Peter, through which the dignity of all priests has always been strengthened and confirmed? Wherefore... is the Lord's discourse so frequently directed to Peter? Was it because the rest of the holy and blessed apostles were not clothed with his virtue?

Who would dare assert this? No, the actual reason was that, with the establishment of a head, the occasion of schism might be removed, and that the compact bond of the body of Christ thus uniformly tending, by the fellowship of the most glorious love, to one head, might be shown to be one; and that there might be faithful belief in one Church, and one house of the one God and of the one Redeemer, wherein we might be nourished with one bread and one chalice... Assuredly there were twelve apostles, endowed with equal merits and equal dignity, and whereas they all shone equally with spiritual light, yet was it Christ's will that one among them should be the Ruler, and He, by a wonderful dispensation, led him to Rome, mistress of the nations, so as to lead Peter, the first and leading apostle, to the first and leading city. And there, as he [Peter] shone sublimely by the power of his doctrine, thus decorated by the glorious shedding of his blood he rests forever, *granting to the see that he himself blessed, that in accordance with the Lord's promise it would never be overcome by the gates of hell*, and would be the safest harbor for all who would be tossed about by the waves. Whoever rests in it shall enjoy a blessed and eternal station, whereas whoever despises it—let him consider what kinds of excuses he may have on judgment day. Believe me, I hope, I trust in Christ, that neither tribulation, nor anguish, nor the sword, nor persecution, nor life, nor death ever shall be able to separate from her charity. [Thiel, 528–30]

In 496, Pope Gelasius died. A contemporary of his, the Scythian monk Dionysius Exiguus, eulogized him, writing:

...receiving the principality in the Church for the salvation of many... he was a man of bright intellect, outstanding life, venerable in authority... considering the honor of the supreme dignity an exceedingly great burden... an imitator of the supreme and good Shepherd, he was an outstanding bishop of the Apostolic See, who fulfilled and taught divine precepts... [PL 67: 231–2]

Pope Gelasius' successor, Anastasius II [496-498], was conciliatory but also capable of firmness. The new pope once wrote to the emperor: "as the lofty name of Your Piety is resplendent among all nations throughout the world, thus, through the ministry of my lowliness, as it is ever the case, may the see of the most blessed Peter retain the principality assigned to it by the Lord God in the universal Church..." [Thiel, 616]

Like his predecessors, Pope Anastasius exhorted the emperor to remove Acacius from the diptychs. Did it make sense to cause schisms among the living for the sake of *dead men* legitimately condemned? The pope did recognize that the baptisms and ordinations performed by Acacius, and by implication his successors, were valid; he also asked for an end to the persecution, and the restoration of Catholicism at Alexandria. [Thiel, 615-23]

The *Collectio Avellana* contains a formal expression of faith which the pope received in 497, from delegates of the Alexandrian church. Translated by the bilingual monk Dionysius Exiguus, the document admitted that Pope Leo's letters were orthodox in the original Latin, but claimed that certain Greek translators had created the impression that Leo's teaching was Nestorian. The document reminded the pope that Rome and Alexandria were churches with the same foundation: had not St. Mark been St. Peter's disciple? At church councils, had not the bishops of Rome delegated their position to the Alexandrian bishop? Then, "wanting to satisfy his holiness," the Alexandrians claimed the same faith that "Peter, prince of the apostles, and his disciple, the most blessed Mark, believed." The *Collectio Avellana* does not specify how the pope reacted to this initiative. [CSEL 35: 468-73]

Patriarch Macedonius II: 'to do nothing without an ecumenical council having as president the bishop of Great Rome'

Meanwhile, at Constantinople there was a new patriarch, Macedonius II [496-511]. According to Theodore Lector, Macedonius did sign the *Henoticon* under imperial pressure but also tried to obtain Roman communion by sending synodical letters to Rome, a move which was

Keys Over the Christian World

prevented by the emperor. Stepping up the persecution, the emperor pressed Macedonius to condemn the Council of Chalcedon. Macedonius refused, resolving to “*do nothing without an ecumenical council having as its president the bishop of Great Rome.*” [HE II, 15-17, 24. PG 86: 189-92, 196]

Theodore Lector adds that after the death of [Pope] Anastasius II in 498, the emperor even tried to create a rival bishop of Rome named Lawrence, although the majority elected the deacon Symmachus [498-514], the legitimate pontiff. [HE II, 17. PG 86, 192-3] Theophanes the Chronographer says much the same thing, adding that Symmachus represented the “more orthodox” side. [A.M. 5993. PG 108: 344]

The new pope’s troubles were not over yet. Trumped-up charges of immorality were made against Symmachus, and King Theodoric [493-526] planned to have the bishops of Italy put the pope on trial. The bishops were uneasy, and let the king know that “*the person under attack should have called the council himself, knowing that in the first place, the office or principality of the apostle Peter, and then the authority of venerable councils, following the Lord’s command, have bestowed on his see an authority unique among the churches, nor should the bishop of that see have been subject to the judgment of his inferiors...*” [Mansi 8: 247-8]

Pointing out the incongruity of putting the pope on trial, the bishops asked, “To him appeals of all the bishops have been committed by the canons, whereas if he himself appeals, what is to be done?” [Thiel, 676-7]

The disquiet was not confined to Italy. In Gaul, St. Avitus, bishop of Vienne, wrote to two Roman Senators, Faustus and Symmachus:

...we were anxious and nervous about the case of the Roman Church, feeling that our own condition was endangered in the attack upon its summit... thus it is not easy to understand by what reason, or by what law, a more eminent man is judged by his inferiors... As a Roman senator and Christian bishop, I urge you not to consider the state of the Church to be less important to you than that of the nation... if the

Pope of the City [of Rome] be called into question, not an individual bishop but the episcopate itself will seem to be in danger... He who governs the Lord's flock will render an account for how he administers the care of the lambs entrusted to him; however, it is not for the flock to alarm its own shepherd, but for the Judge. [Ep. 31. PL 59: 248-9]

Saint Avitus also wrote to Senarius, Count of the Patrimony of Theodoric:

You know that the synodal laws have it, that if any doubt arise in matters regarding the state of the church, we have recourse to the supreme bishop of the Roman Church as to our head... [Ep. 36. PL 59: 253]

Ennodius, who later became bishop of Ticinum, concurred, writing:

God perchance has willed to terminate the cases of other men by means of men, but the prelate of that see He has undoubtedly reserved to His own judgment. It is His will that the successors of the blessed apostle Peter should owe their innocence to heaven alone, and should demonstrate a pure conscience to the examination of the most stern Judge. Do you answer, such will be the condition of all souls in that scrutiny? I answer that to one was said, "Thou art Peter..." And again, by the voice of holy pontiffs, the dignity of his see has been made venerable throughout the world, since all the faithful everywhere are subject to it, and it is marked out as head of the entire body. [Mansi 8: 284]

In another letter to Pope Symmachus, dictated in the name of King Sigismund, St. Avitus calls him literally 'bishop of the universal church,' *universalis ecclesiae praesulem*. [Ep. 27. PL 59: 243]

In his own letter to Pope Symmachus, Ennodius remarks, "you rule

the summit of the heavenly empire...” [CSEL 6: 133]

The popes of this period frequently identify Rome’s communion with the communion of Blessed Peter, a concept found in the *Life* of St. Fulgentius, bishop of Ruspe. As a young monk from northern Africa, Fulgentius had dreamed of going to lead a quiet, retired life in the Thebaid, which was famous for its monasticism but was within the sphere of monophysite heresy. During his travels Fulgentius met Eulalius, bishop of Syracuse. When he learned of the young monk’s plans, Eulalius gave Fulgentius a warning: “the lands to which you want to proceed have been separated from the communion of Blessed Peter by an unbelieving dissension... Return, my son, lest, in your quest for a better life, your right faith is endangered.” [PL 65: 129]

Eulalius was present at a synod of November 6, 502, and defended the authority of Pope Symmachus against lay interference, declaring:

...if the holy fathers decreed that whatever the bishops of any province, in a council within their [purview], attempted without the authority of their metropolitan bishop must be invalid, how much more unquestionably invalid is what was done in the Apostolic See, which was without a bishop, who, obtaining the primacy of the priesthood throughout the world by the prerogative [and] merits of the blessed apostle Peter, is accustomed to give synodal statutes their confirmation? [Thiel, 688-9]

Fulgentius had learned his lesson. Later on, as a bishop, he wrote of the true faith in the incarnation, “which the Roman Church, summit of the world, enlightened with resplendent rays by the words of two great luminaries, Peter and Paul, and decorated with their bodies, holds and teaches, and the entire Christian world unhesitatingly believes and teaches with her, unto righteousness and salvation.” [PL 65: 465]

Eugene, primate of Carthage, concurred. In early 484, summoned by an Arian king, Geiseric, to speak for the Catholic faith, Eugene invoked

the authority of “the Roman Church, head of all the churches.” Eugene’s profession was recorded by another bishop, Victor of Vita, who wrote the history of the fierce Arian persecution in Africa. [PL 58: 215]

As for Pope Symmachus, he had to continue defending himself from unjust attacks by the emperor, who had called him a Manichean. About 506, he wrote the Byzantine sovereign:

You thought you could resist my office, which Blessed Peter imposed by his intervention. Or do you resist Peter’s authority because you are emperor? And do you, who receive Peter [Mongus] of Alexandria, endeavor to trample upon Blessed Peter the apostle in his lowly vicar? [Thiel, 703]

Pope Symmachus reminded the emperor that Catholic princes cooperated with apostolic pontiffs, adding:

...as good sons they sought, with the affection of due piety, to [act in harmony with] that confession *and more eminent see to which, as you know, the care of the entire Church was delegated by the mouth of the Lord Himself.* [Thiel, 705]

Meanwhile, the pope received an urgent plea from various bishops of the east, entitled, *The Eastern Church to Symmachus, Bishop of Rome*. The text of this missive speaks for itself. Reminding the pope of Christ’s parables about the lost sheep and drachma, and the “rejoicing in heaven for one sinner who repents,” the bishops continued:

This is what we say in daring to ask your help, not in the matter of the loss of a sheep or a drachma, but for the precious salvation not only of the east, but of almost three quarters of the universe, redeemed not with corruptible gold or silver but with the precious blood of the Lamb of God according to the doctrine of the blessed leader of the glorious apostles, *whose see Christ the Good Shepherd has*

entrusted to Your Beatitude. After his example, most holy Father, hasten to assist us just as the blessed Paul, your teacher, when informed in a vision that the Macedonians were in danger, hastened to succor them in reality.

O Father full of tenderness for your children, since it is not in a vision but in reality that with your mind's eyes you see us perishing *by the prevarication of our father Acacius*, do not delay, or rather, to speak with the prophet, do not sleep, but hasten to help us. You have received not only the power to bind, but also to loose, after the Master's example, those who have long been in chains; [you have received] not only the power to tear down and destroy, but also that of building and planting like Jeremias, or rather like Jesus Christ, of whom Jeremias was the figure, not only the power to deliver up to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, but also that of bringing back to life through charity those who have long been rejected, for fear that—God forbid—Satan, coming to immerse us in great sorrow appear to prevail over you. You are not unaware of his malice, you whom Peter, your sacred teacher, teaches every day to feed, not by violence but by a well accepted authority, Christ's sheep entrusted to you throughout the world. We urge you then to tear up this new decree that weighs over us as Jesus Christ, our Savior but also our Head, tore up the old one on the cross.

If Acacius was anathematized because of his friendship for the Alexandrians or rather for the Eutychians, who anathematize Leo and the Council of Chalcedon, why are we considered heretics and put under anathema, we who are attached only to the letter of Leo which was read at the council, we who are attacked each day and condemned as heretics by the Eutychians, because we preach your orthodox teaching?

Do not disdain to help us and do not despise us

because we are in communion with our enemies. Among those who only had the care of a small number of souls, many have separated themselves from their communion; others, placed over a smaller flock, have given way to necessity so as not to abandon the sheep to the wolf, like the hireling. It is not out of love of life, but only for the salvation of souls that a great number of priests act this way...

All of us, both those who appear to be in communion with the adversaries and those who abstain from it await, after God, the light of your visitation and assistance. Hasten to assist the east, whence the Savior has sent you two great suns to enlighten the whole world; render to it what it has sent you; enlighten it with the light of the true faith as it has enlightened you with the light of divine knowledge.

Just as the Savior said to Paul regarding Corinth: "Speak, and do not keep silence, because I have a great number of people in this city," so he tells you today: hasten and go without delay to the aid of the east, for it is not a multitude of 120,000 men as at Niniveh, but a far greater crowd which awaits, after God, its healing from you. [Mansi 8: 221-6]

The pope exhorted the bishops to suffer courageously and hold fast to Chalcedon, but to avoid all communion with the followers of Acacius. Only on these conditions, he wrote, could the easterners have communion with Rome, "for those who thought that the Apostolic See's admonition ought to be neglected have deservedly fallen into the lot of people deprived of solace." [Thiel, 722]

Finally, the beleaguered orthodox east got some relief: in 514, a military commander named Vitalian revolted, occupying Thrace and Moesia and threatening Constantinople itself. Vitalian demanded an ecumenical council in which the pope and the rest of the bishops would participate, and an end to the persecution of the orthodox. The emperor promised to

Keys Over the Christian World

convoke the council at Heraclea in Thrace. [Theophanes, A.M. 6006. PG 108: 373]

The deacon Liberatus of Carthage, a Latin chronicler, adds that Vitalian was prepared to end the revolt only on condition that the emperor “restore to their sees the defenders of the Council of Chalcedon who had been exiled, and unite all the churches of the east to the Roman Church.” [PL 68: 951]

When Pope Symmachus died in 514 and was succeeded in the summer by the deacon Hormisdas [514–523], the emperor contacted Rome. In letters of December 514 and January 515, Anastasius, admitting that Christ had placed *the strength of his church especially in Blessed Peter*, proposed a doctrinal peace plan: an ecumenical council at Heraclea, with the pope acting as “mediator.” [CSEL 35: 499–502]

The pope also heard from Dorotheus, bishop of Thessalonica. Writing in 515, Dorotheus spoke of “the members of the Church, which Christ our God has entrusted to you,” praised the pope for uniting the scattered members of the church “unto the principality of his see,” and invoked the intercession of the blessed apostles Peter and Paul, “so that due honor may justly be observed and rendered to their venerable see and to Your Beatitude... in accordance with the principality...” [CSEL 35: 495–7]

As for the projected ecumenical council, the pope replied to the emperor that the healing of the schism “was always the prayer of our predecessors as well, who have proven to be both ministers of the tradition of the fathers and guardians of the true faith.” [CSEL 35: 500]

The Formula of Pope Hormisdas

In August 515, the pope determined to send a delegation to Constantinople, including the bishops Ennodius of Pavia and Fortunatus of Catania, the priest Venantius, the deacon Vitalis and the notary Hilary. The legates received detailed instructions, known as the *Indiculus qui datus est Ennodio*. The *Indiculus*, and a new series of papal letters to the court, made

clear the conditions for true unity. The Byzantines would have to sign a profession of faith known as the Formula of Pope Hormisdas, accept the Council of Chalcedon and the letters of St. Leo, condemn Nestorius, Eutyches, Dioscorus, Acacius and other heretics, reinstate bishops deposed for the sake of orthodoxy, and give them a hearing before the Apostolic See, “so that judgment and a real examination may be possible.” [CSEL 35: 513-20]

The formula of Pope Hormisdas reads:

The first condition of salvation is to keep the rule of the true faith, and not to deviate in any way from the tradition of the fathers. *And because the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ cannot be overlooked, which says: “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I shall build my Church,” these things which have been said are proven by the events, because in the Apostolic See the Catholic religion has always been preserved immaculate. Not wanting to fall away from this faith, and following the constitutions of the fathers in all respects, we anathematize all heresies, especially the heretic Nestorius, who was once bishop of the city of Constantinople, condemned at the Council of Ephesus by Celestine, pope of the city of Rome, and by the holy Cyril, bishop of Alexandria; and together with him we anathematize Eutyches and Dioscorus of Alexandria, who were condemned in the holy council of Chalcedon, which we follow and embrace. Along with them we anathematize Timothy the parricide [the Cat], surnamed Elurus, and his disciple and follower in all things, Peter [Mongus] of Alexandria. In like manner we condemn and anathematize Acacius, former bishop of the city of Constantinople, their accomplice and follower, as well as those who persevered in their communion, for whoever embraces the communion*

of (such) individuals receives a similar judgment at their condemnation. We also condemn Peter of Antioch [the Fuller], along with his followers... Consequently we receive and approve all the letters of the blessed Pope Leo, which he wrote concerning the true faith. Wherefore, as we have already said, following in all things the Apostolic See and preaching whatever has been decreed by it, I hope that I may deserve to be in one communion with you, which the Apostolic See preaches, in which is the complete and true solidity of the Christian religion. I also promise that during the celebration of the sacred mysteries, I shall not recite the names of those who were separated from the communion of the Catholic Church, that is, those who do not agree in every respect with the Apostolic See. This profession of faith I have signed with my own hand, and offered it to you, Hormisdas, holy and venerable pope of the city of Rome. [CSEL 35: 520–22]

A Greek fragment of the historian John of Antioch, which mentions “those from Old Rome, who made disposition regarding the doctrine of the priests,” seems to refer to the papal delegation. [Muller, Karl, *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum*, Paris 1873, 5: 32]

As it turned out, however, the emperor was playing for time; there was not going to be any council. Anastasius dismissed the two hundred bishops who had gathered at Heraclea, and the persecution continued. [Theophanes, A.M. 6006. PG 108: 376]

Meanwhile, there had been *some* positive developments. Writing to Caesarius of Arles on September 11, 515, the pope remarked:

Practically all the bishops both of Dardania as well as Illyricum, along with the Scythians, condemning their earlier error [and] requesting the communion of Blessed Peter, prince of the apostles, are confirming that they are obeying the rulings of the Apostolic See, both in writing

and by delegations sent here... [Ep. 9. Thiel, 759]

In September 516 John, bishop of Nicopolis, announced his ordination “to Hormisdas, prince of bishops.” Submitting a perfectly orthodox profession of faith, John wrote:

Fittingly do I have recourse to your prayers, so that in accordance with the custom of your Apostolic See, you may deign to have the care of all the churches, and that of Nicopolis, according to your ancient spiritual disposition. [CSEL 35: 522]

In late 516 the pope received some moral support from Avitus, bishop of Vienne. Writing that it was “entirely befitting the status of religion and the complete rules of the Catholic faith that your highly vigilant care inform the flock entrusted to you throughout all the members of the Universal Church,” Avitus congratulated Hormisdas for the return of the Dardanian, Illyrian and Scythian provinces. [CSEL 35: 558-9]

In April 517, Pope Hormisdas informed the emperor that John “has requested the communion of Blessed Peter with his synod, having condemned those whom the Church detests.” After rebuking Dorotheus for harrassing John, the pope directed the legates Ennodius and Peregrinus to deliver letters to the bishop of Thessalonica, “observing what you know that we have commanded about those who are not in communion with the Apostolic See, that is, with the Catholic Church.” [CSEL 35: 545, 555-7]

On April 3, 517, Hormisdas sent a solemn appeal to all the bishops of the east, urging them to return “to the rock, on which the church was founded,” and be vigilant shepherds. [CSEL 35: 549]

Hormisdas received another appeal from the east, signed by numerous archimandrites and monks of Second Syria. The appeal, bearing almost two hundred signatures, is addressed “*to the most holy and blessed patriarch of the whole world, Hormisdas, occupying the see of Peter, prince of the*

Keys Over the Christian World

apostles.” It contains appalling details about the persecution in the east. The monks wrote:

Taught by the grace of our Savior to have recourse to Your Beatitude as to a tranquil harbor in a storm, we believe that we have already been delivered from the evils weighing upon us... As Christ our God has constituted you the prince of pastors, the teacher and physician of souls, you and your holy messenger, it is just to explain to you the trials that have come upon us and point out to you the cruel wolves who are ravaging the flock of Christ, so that Your Beatitude may drive them away from the sheep with the staff of authority, that you may heal souls by the word of doctrine and soothe their wounds by the remedy of prayer...

Your Beatitude will be informed of everything by the reports that will be sent by our venerable brothers John and Sergius. We had sent them to Constantinople, hoping to obtain justice from these excesses, but the emperor did not deign to say a word to them; on the contrary, he drove them out ignominiously, uttering threats against the authors of the complaints...

We beg you, we urge you, O blessed Father, rise up full of zeal and ardor, have compassion on the body torn to pieces, since you are the head of all; avenge the faith which has been despised, the canons trampled underfoot, the fathers blasphemed, the holy council struck with anathema. God has given you the power and authority of binding and loosing. Yet it is not the good who need the physician, but the sick. Arise then, holy Fathers, and come to save us; be imitators of our Master who came down from heaven to earth to look for the wandering sheep. Consider Peter, prince of the apostles, whose throne you adorn, and Paul, this vessel of election: they have gone throughout the universe to enlighten it. Great wounds call for even greater remedies.

The hirelings, seeing the wolves come upon the flock, abandon the sheep to them; as for you, true shepherds and true teachers, to whom the salvation of the sheep has been entrusted, it is the flock itself, given over to ferocious beasts, which comes before you, recognizing its shepherd and following his voice, as the Lord said: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they know me." Do not despise us, most holy father, we who are wounded daily by ferocious beasts.

So that your holy messenger may be completely informed, we anathematize in this petition, which for us takes the place of a profession of faith, those whom your holy see has rejected and excommunicated, meaning: Nestorius, Eutyches, Dioscorus, Peter Mongus, Peter the Fuller, Acacius, and whoever defends any of these heretics. [CSEL 35: 565 sq.]

The subscriptions are led by a certain Alexander, "by the mercy of God a priest and archimandrite of St. Maron." The disciples of Maron, then, enter the records of history as defenders of the faith and martyrs. The letter informs Pope Hormisdas that *three hundred fifty* monks had been massacred by heretics. In February 518, the pope answered the intrepid monks, praising those who were "recurring to the teachings and mandates of the Apostolic See," and urging them to shun all heresies. [CSEL 35: 572 sq.]

The trial had been horrible, but it was not going to last much longer. Before long, another piece of news came from the east: Anastasius, chief persecutor of the Church, was dead.

Chapter XIV

The Keys Triumphant

The arrival of a new emperor, Justin I [518–527], created an opportunity to restore orthodoxy. Popular outcry demanded that Justin and the patriarch, John II, expel Severus of Antioch, leader of the monophysites, and restore the Council of Chalcedon. On Sunday, July 16, 518, and the following day, after the bishop of Constantinople had entered the sanctuary for the Divine Liturgy, the people exclaimed:

Proclaim the holy Council [of Chalcedon]. Of whom are you afraid? Emperor Justin, may you be victorious. Proclaim the Council of Chalcedon... Proclaim the feast of the Council of Chalcedon! We won't leave until you have proclaimed it! Proclaim for tomorrow the feast of the Fathers; proclaim for tomorrow the feast of the Fathers of Chalcedon! Bring back Euphemius and Macedonius to the Church! Let synodical letters go to Rome! Many years to the patriarch! Emperor Justin, be triumphant! Many years to the Empress!" [Mansi 8: 1057–66]

In 518, the Byzantine Church instituted a feast of the Council of Chalcedon, and has observed it ever since then. The other side, to be sure, was not happy. Centuries later, a Syriac monophysite writer, Bar Hebraeus [1226–1286], attributed political motives to Justin's decision to restore the Council of Chalcedon. Bar Hebraeus wrote that Justin was persuaded "to accept the Council of Chalcedon which was gathered together by the diligence of Leo of the Romans, because all the countries of Italy would join with him and one [united] kingdom would come into being..." [*Chronography*, ed. Wallis Budge, 73]

Keys Over the Christian World

The Church of Constantinople had renounced heresy. However, if the schism was to be healed, it was necessary to restore communion with Rome. The orthodox faithful knew this, hence the exclamation: *Let synodical letters go to Rome!* Synodical letters were letters that each new patriarch sent to the other patriarchs, containing a formal profession of faith. Other patriarchs granted or refused communion to the new patriarch, depending on whether the profession of faith was orthodox or not, whether the election was valid, and so on.

Meanwhile Justin was restoring exiled orthodox bishops and the heretics, for a change, were sent packing. In August 518 Justin had written to Pope Hormisdas, who in reply encouraged the new emperor, writing:

You have rendered due first-fruits of your kingdom to the blessed apostle Peter, which for this reason we have devoutly accepted, because through you we believe that in the future the churches will undoubtedly be in concord...
[CSEL 35: 586]

The Byzantines were cooperating. While Justin asked the pope to send legates to Constantinople, Patriarch John II restored the names of Popes Leo and Hormisdas to the diptychs, signifying the restoration of communion. In a letter to Hormisdas, John announced:

I and those who are with me in the Lord, greet the whole brotherhood in Christ, which is with Your Holiness: only we have written to satisfy you *that the venerable name of Leo, of holy memory, former archbishop of the city of Rome, has been affixed to the sacred diptychs at the time of consecration for the sake of concord, and your own blessed name is recited in the diptychs in like manner.* So that Your Holiness may be satisfied that we embrace your peace, and care for the unity of the holy Churches of God, we ask you to send men of peace who are worthy of your Apostolic See, who will both satisfy you and receive our satisfaction that in this region also, Christ our God, who through you has preserved this peace for the

world, is glorified. [CSEL 35: 592]

Count Justinian, the emperor's nephew, thought that there was only one more issue to be settled: "...to hear Your Beatitude's consent only regarding the name of Acacius." [CSEL 35: 593]

In a reply to Justin in January 519, the pope urged the Byzantines to sign the *libellus*, or formal profession of faith, which he had composed and sent to Constantinople:

As for the matters which, up to the present, have torn asunder the peace of the Churches in contentious obstinacy, neither your piety nor they are unaware of the latent cause. *What they are to do, then, is contained both in our letters and in the course of the libellus which we sent.* If, with the help of God and of your clemency, they receive and follow these things, it will be possible to reach that concord which we desire with the utmost ardor. [CSEL 35: 589]

Pope Hormisdas was pleased with the measures taken by the patriarch. "Gladly have we accepted the confession [of faith]," he wrote back to John. But words had to be backed up by deeds: that meant the condemnation of Acacius, and even of his successors, Euphemius and Macedonius and the rest, the pope explained:

...to receive the Council of Chalcedon and to follow St. Leo's letters, and also to defend the name of Acacius—this is to defend self-contradictory things. Who could defend Dioscorus and Eutyches, and demonstrate the innocence of Acacius? Who would shun Timothy [the Cat] and Peter [Mongus] of Alexandria, and the other Peter [the Fuller] of Antioch and their adherents, as we have said, and not detest Acacius, who followed their communion?" [CSEL 35: 590]

Hormisdas urged the patriarch to sign the formula of faith included with the papal letters:

...After these things, what else is left except that you also follow without fear the judgments of the Apostolic See, whose faith you profess to embrace? Show then to the eastern regions an example that they may follow through you, so that the praise of all those who shall have been corrected may be credited to your labors. Since therefore you announce great things, and you signify that you embrace the faith of Blessed Peter the apostle, rightly believing that our salvation can subsist in it, send us the *libellus* subjoined below containing [that faith] signed by your charity, so that without any fear of conscience we may be able to have one communion, as we pray... [CSEL 35: 590]

Because of their defense of the Chalcedonian faith, the late patriarchs Euphemius and Macedonius were considered holy men by many in the east, who had trouble understanding why Rome insisted on their condemnation. The pope's instructions to his legates note that if the emperor and patriarch consented to the condemnation of Acacius, but not to that of Euphemius and Macedonius, the envoys were supposed to declare at first that they had no authority to modify the formula condemning the adherents of Acacius. If the Greeks insisted, the legates would grant this concession: in the special anathema against Acacius, his successors would not be mentioned, but would be struck from the diptychs none the less. As for the eastern bishops in general, the Pope required above all that they subscribe to his formula: in no way were the legates supposed to remain in communion with those who refused to sign it. [CSEL 35: 606]

Although the Byzantines had invited Hormisdas to come in person, the pope, following protocol and precedent, sent a solemn delegation including the bishops Germanus and John, the priest Blandus and the deacons Felix and Dioscorus. Pope Hormisdas also wrote to Justin, his spouse Euphemia, Count Justinian, and Patriarch John. Yes, Acacius had to be condemned *with his adherents*. There was nothing unjust about this: Acacius had been the accomplice of heretics, and had upheld their communion, thus meriting a similar punishment—things equal to the same thing are equal to each other. [DTC 6: 2174]

In his letter to Patriarch John, the pope faced the issues squarely:

You yourself are aware what the cause of unity requires, *you yourself know by what road you must come to the fellowship of Blessed Peter the apostle*: you have a leader in your journey, which you assert that you are already following: the council held for the sake of religion at Chalcedon; on your return, the teaching of Blessed Leo, which you have testified that you embrace, shall accompany you. *If these things please you, let not the defense of the condemned Acacius please you*: this is what keeps your desires for a praiseworthy endeavor from perfection...

It is not novelties, then, that we persist in following, but rather we preserve the just judgments made at that time by the constitution of the fathers. Accordingly we exhort you, brother, and we call upon you, with the help of the mercy of our God, that separating yourself from every contagion of the heretics by condemning Acacius and his followers, you may be fed together with us in the participation of the body of the Lord. *If you preach whatever we preach, why do you not condemn whatever we condemn?* [CSEL 35, 598-99]

Notwithstanding the pitfalls, Hormisdas sensed that reunion was near. He wrote to Empress Euphemia:

The peace of the churches is already being brought about by heavenly ordinance...and indeed many things have been done at the outset of your reign that promise us the hope of complete correction...for through you, Christ wills to call back to union with the Church those peoples whom he willed to redeem from death... *May then the religious clemency of your authority act in such wise that our brethren and fellow bishops deign to profess their faith in the terms of the libellus which we sent long ago*, so that the correction under way may

be complete: for in the worship of God, any confession that lacks the fulness of faith is invalid. *For it is clear that many bishops have already complied with what we ask of the rest...* [CSEL 35: 603–4]

Two noblewomen, Anastasia and Palmatia, had held out for orthodoxy during the persecution. The pope asked them to assist in the reconciliation, writing:

...spare no labor or effort for the restoration of ecclesiastical concord so that, with the removal and expulsion of those whom the Apostolic See's authority has condemned, the Christian people shall return to the one communion which is right, (and that) in your actions you may have Blessed Peter the apostle, for whose faith we contend, as your helper. [CSEL 35: 605]

Rome's legates reached Constantinople in March 519. John II, bishop of Constantinople, signed the *libellus* or formula of faith, and sent it in the form of a letter to Pope Hormisdas, which begins:

To my Lord, in all things my most holy and blessed brother and fellow-minister Hormisdas, John, bishop, health in the Lord... I have received the letters of Your Holiness, beloved brother in Christ, by the illustrious Count Gratus, the most reverend bishops Germanus and John, the most holy deacons Felix and Dioscorus and the priest Blandus. I rejoiced at the spiritual charity of Your Holiness in that you seek the unity of the most holy churches of God in accordance with the tradition of the ancient Fathers, and that your heart is set on driving away all those who are tearing apart Christ's spiritual flock. Be certain then, most holy (brother), that as I have written to you, in sincere accord with you and loving peace, I too reject all the heretics that you reject. For I take the most holy churches of God, that of your old Rome and that of this New Rome to be one; I

define that that see of Peter the apostle and of this royal city are one. I adhere to all the acts of the four holy councils of Nicea, Constantinople, Ephesus and Chalcedon about the confirmation of the faith and the state of the Church, and I do not suffer anything that has been well judged to be undermined: on the contrary, I know that those who strive to alter just one point have fallen from the holy, Catholic and apostolic Church of God; and making clear use of your well spoken words, by these present letters I say the following... [CSEL 35: 607-8]

The letter continues with the words of the *libellus*, or profession of faith, which the pope had sent into the east, including these phrases at the end:

Now if in any respect I attempt to deviate from my [present] profession [of faith], by my own sentence I profess that I am in the company of those whom I have condemned. This profession I have signed with my own hand, and sent it in writing to you, Hormisdas, holy and most blessed brother and Pope of great Rome, by the above-mentioned venerable bishops Germanus and John, and the deacons Felix and Dioscorus, and the priest Blandus.

I John, by God's mercy bishop of Constantinople, New Rome, adhering to everything said above by this my profession [of faith], have signed enjoying full liberty in the Lord. Given on March 27, in the twelfth indiction, with the consent of the Lord Emperor Justinus Augustus, in the consulate of the glorious Eutharic. [CSEL 35: 607-10]

On Easter Sunday, March 31, 519, a solemn office was celebrated in the cathedral. The subdeacon Pollion sent reports to Rome from the legates, Emperor Justin, John II, and Count Justinian. Latin and Greek copies of the *libellus* were also forwarded. What an easter it must have been in Constantinople! The legates offered this glowing report:

The whole course of ecclesiastical business worked out in such a way that beyond any doubt, everything occurred through a miracle of Blessed Peter... Finally on Thursday, that is, on the Lord's Supper, the bishop came into the palace in a general meeting, and after reading the *libellus* he was in agreement, and subscribed with the utmost devotion... We went from the palace into the church with the greatest solemnity, so that the pomp and circumstance would further strengthen the concord of faith and of hearts. It is hardly possible to believe what weeping for joy there was, and the immense extent of the crowd. The crowd itself bore witness to its joy, nor could it be doubted that a heavenly hand was present to confer such joy upon the world. The name of Acacius, the anathematized prevaricator, as well as that of the other bishops who followed him in communion, were erased before our eyes. In like manner the names of Anastasius and Zeno were removed from recitation at the altar. Through your prayers, peace has been restored to the minds of Christians: for the whole Church there is but one mind, but one joy; only the enemy of the human race is mourning, having been bruised through the opposition of your prayers. Pray that a similar happiness may illumine the [church] of Antioch, so that the peace initiated in your time may be directed throughout the world, and as every member comes together in apostolic communion and faith, as it once was, the Church may be joined with her Head. [CSEL 35: 683-4]

Dioscorus the deacon reported that Fravitas, Euphemius, Macedonius and Timothy had been struck from the diptychs, and that "the clergy of Constantinople as well, expressing admiration and giving thanks to God, say that they never remember any time when such a great multitude of people received communion." [CSEL 35: 620-21]

How many bishops signed the Formula of Pope Hormisdas? The ancient *Collectio Avellana*, compiled about 550, calls it a *libellus* or profession

of faith “which Pope Hormisdas laid down, to be given by all the bishops of Greece.” [CSEL 35: 800]

The Roman deacon Rusticus [c. 550] speaks of the *libelli*, or professions of faith, “of perhaps *twenty-five hundred* priests, under Emperor Justin, after the schism of Peter [Mongus] of Alexandria, and Acacius of Constantinople.” [PL 67, 1251–2] It is difficult to say how much this figure may have been inflated by the inclusion of archimandrites and lesser clergy.

The formula of Hormisdas also required the bishops to accept *the letters of Pope Leo*, a condition the pope had laid down back in 515, when he had sent legates into the east. In his letters, Pope Leo had not only defined the faith and claimed to preside at the ecumenical council through his legates, he had expressly rejected canon 28 and defended the traditional order of sees, naming Antioch the third see and denying that Constantinople was a major see at all.

Both John II and the Byzantine rulers were delighted at the restoration of communion with Rome, and desired that this unity last forever, so that, as Juliana of Anicia wrote to Pope Hormisdas, “with all remains of the past error excluded, the unity strengthened by Your Beatitude’s efforts may be led to perpetual effect.” [CSEL 35: 615]

True unity had been restored. The pope sent another messenger named Paulinus to Constantinople, with this letter for the emperor:

After I read your clemency’s letters announcing the restoration of agreement in the faith, the mind of the entire Church rejoiced (and) broke out into a canticle of divine praise, singing: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will.” For God has handed over to you the empire of the east that you might become the instrument of his works...To what purpose [do we say] these things? Because there still remain for you the correction of the Churches of Alexandria and Antioch, which are not in any way to be neglected, in which if Your Clemency extends

his care, we may hope that all the good works may be completed through the same hand by which we believe they were begun... [CSEL 35: 622-4]

Pope Hormisdas was equally pleased with Patriarch John II, and wrote to him:

As I consider the writings of Your Love, *in which you profess to have one faith with that of the blessed apostle Peter*, it seems permissible to exclaim in those prophetic words: “Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity.” For neither does it matter how great a distance divides us, when by God’s handiwork we are joined in one common dwelling of the faith. For now the divine mercy has procured that the once scattered members of Christ have come together into the completeness of one body, and the inheritance of our Lord, announced by prophetic voices, having been laid waste by thieves, is now restored, *and truly in the faith of this rock, that is, the firmness of the prince of the apostles, the eastern church’s foundations are made solid*. Since your letters have already indicated that this has been done, it must be said with timely rejoicing: “How beautiful are the feet of those who announce peace, of those who announce good tidings!” [CSEL 35: 624-5]

The pope sent a copy of his formula of faith to the Spanish bishops, directing that any eastern clergy in Spain who wished to be reconciled with Rome must sign it. [Mansi 8: 467-8]

There were some setbacks: on September 2, 519, Pope Hormisdas wrote to Emperor Justin about three bishops, Elias, Thomas and Nicostratus, calling their ejection “no small injury to the Apostolic See.” Appealing to Justin’s reverence for “the principality of the Apostolic See,” the pope asked him to restore them. [CSEL 35: 661]

Meanwhile, sad news reached the pope: his legate John, who had gone to Thessalonica to collect signatures for the formula of faith, had been murdered in a riot caused by the priest Aristides. The pope wanted the emperor to send Aristides to Rome. As for Dorotheus, bishop of Thessalonica, Hormisdas remarked, “let him receive doctrine from the Apostolic See, and whatever he considers doubtful, let him learn from us, by coming here to examine us now.” [CSEL 35: 690-92]

In April 519, the pope heard from Andrew, bishop of Praevalitanus, who along with his brother bishops wanted to be “perfect servants of the Apostolic See.” Andrew suspected that the bishops of New Epirus were not sincere about ending the schism; the archbishop of the province, Andrew informed the pope, could not be persuaded to turn “to the way of truth and your precepts.” [CSEL 35: 674]

At the end of 519, Pope Hormisdas wrote to his legate, the deacon Dioscorus. The pope thought it would be a good idea for Dioscorus to be ordained bishop of Alexandria. [CSEL 35: 631]

Patriarch John II of Constantinople died in early 520, one year after the solemn reunion. The next patriarch at Constantinople, Epiphanius, was orthodox and widely praised for his virtues. Epiphanius, however, began on the wrong foot, and the pope chided him for having failed to send legates to Rome at once. [CSEL 35: 664]

In July 520, the pope received a consultation about the faith from Possessor, the refugee African bishop. The letter begins:

As often as the health of the members is in question, it is fitting and expedient to have recourse to healing medicine from the head. For who has greater care for his subjects, or from whom is stability to be sought for imperiled faith, more than from the bishop of that see whose ruler heard from Christ: “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church?” [CSEL 35: 695]

Juliana of Anicia also praised the pope's faith, writing: "Venerable father, the care you show for the integrity of our faith is fitting for the vicars of the glorious apostle Peter, to whom the Lord enjoined the duty of feeding the sheep." [CSEL 35: 653]

The pope also heard from Patriarch Epiphanius, who wrote:

...it is my prayer to be united to you, and embrace the divine teachings which have been handed down to your holy see by God's holy disciples and apostles, especially Peter, head of the apostles... Similarly, I embrace and receive the truly right and most religious letters of the venerable Pope Leo, written for the true faith. [CSEL 35: 653]

Delighted with his virtues and profession of faith, the pope entrusted Epiphanius with the task of reconciling the rest of the eastern clergy, as long as they kept to the contents of the pope's formula of faith. The pope had express instructions for receiving clergy from the patriarchate of Jerusalem and the area of Thessalonica. "I am endeavoring to think and do what is agreeable to you," Epiphanius replied. [Thiel, 970-78, 986]

Monophysites, of course, were not happy with these developments. Philoxenus, bishop of Mabboug and an extremely vocal monophysite leader, maintained that the Romans were Nestorian heretics. In his lengthy *Letter to the Monks of Senoun*, Philoxenus claimed:

Those who have come from Rome are... real heretics, who fully hold the opinion of Nestorius. Relying on the primacy of honor which they have by custom, they have openly handed down impiety, and embraced the Council of Chalcedon... They rely on Leo, because of the primacy of honor which that see has by custom [and] on the Council of Chalcedon, because of the great number of bishops... [CSCO 232 (Syr. 99): 60, 80]

Philoxenus went on to complain that Paul, patriarch of Antioch,

“approves of those from Rome in every respect.” [CSCO 232 (Syr. 99): 61]

In another letter, Philoxenus described Rome’s requirements for the reunion of the churches as “tyrannical propositions.” [Ed. J. Lebon. “Textes Inédits de Philoxène de Mabboug.” *Le Museon*, 43 (1930), 219]

As for Severus, the monophysite leader who had seized the see of Antioch in 512, he was forced to flee into Egypt.

The formula of Pope Hormisdas entered history in a striking way on one other historical occasion, when the worthy patriarch, St. Ignatius of Constantinople, was unjustly driven from his see and replaced by the former imperial secretary, Photius. At the Fourth Council of Constantinople [869–870], in which about a hundred bishops of the east participated, the Roman legates made the bishops sign an expanded and adapted version of the formula of Pope Hormisdas. [Mansi 16: 27 sq.]

That controversy, however, was fully three and a half centuries in the future. For now, the keys of Simon Peter had prevailed.

Chapter XV

The Keys in Exile

Not all parties in the east were content to adhere to the decrees of Chalcedon pure and simple. Certain Scythian monks felt that it was necessary to add the formula, “One of the Trinity suffered in the flesh,” presented as a bulwark against Nestorianism. In 519, the monks offered a *libellus* or profession of faith to the Roman legates, citing Catholic fathers such as Pope Leo. The title claims that it was “received at Rome by the blessed Pope Hormisdas,” read at a meeting of bishops before the entire church and all the senators, pronounced Catholic, and “approved in every respect.” [ACO IV, Vol. 2, 3 sq.]

Count Justinian, the emperor’s nephew, who became involved in the matter, wrote to Pope Hormisdas:

The unity of the holy churches comes about through the doctrine and authority of Your Apostleship... If there is anything still in dissension from the peace of the entire world, let that too be associated with the communion of the Apostolic See, through your prayers. [Thiel, 875-7]

On August 31, Justinian wrote to the pope again, requesting answers to his entreaties, “so that everyone may understand that with reason have you obtained the primacy of the Apostolic See.” [Thiel, 939-940]

The papal legates had also forwarded reports about the monks’ activities. On June 29, the legates had written that the monks were claiming that “all who were in communion with the Apostolic See were Nestorians.” [Thiel, 871]

Another legate, the deacon Dioscorus, had written on May 30 that the formula *One of the Trinity*... “was said neither in the holy synods, nor in the holy pope Leo’s letters.” Fearing that the controversy would cause scandal, Dioscorus had warned, “if, after the Synod of Chalcedon, if after the letters of Pope Leo, if after the *libelli* which the bishops have given and are giving—and by them have satisfied the Apostolic See— something new be added yet again, it seems to me that whatever has been accomplished is destroyed.” [Thiel, 869–70]

The legates had even gone before the emperor and the senate, protesting: “Outside of the four synods, outside of the letters of Pope Leo, we neither say nor admit (anything); whatever is not contained in those synods, whatever was not written by Pope Leo, we do not receive...” [Thiel, 873]

The formula “One of the Trinity...” was orthodox in itself, but the pope was becoming suspicious of the monks. The Church had just endured decades of crisis because of individuals presuming to substitute their formulas of faith for the decrees of Chalcedon. Were the monks trying to reopen questions that had already been answered?

On September 9, 520, Justinian wrote to the pope again. Was it really necessary to erase from the diptychs the names of *everybody* who had died in schism? Justinian repeated his request that the pope approve the formula, “One of the Trinity...”, writing:

Let Your Apostleship show that you have worthily succeeded to the Apostle Peter, since the Lord will bring about through you, as Supreme Shepherd, the salvation of all, with concord established... [Thiel, 955]

A Pope in the Royal City

When Pope Hormisdas died in 523, his son Silverius, “captivated by the love of Peter,” wrote the late pontiff’s epitaph, eulogizing his father for healing the thirty-five year schism of Acacius [484–519]. “Greece yielded

to thee,” wrote Silverius, “overcome by a pious command, rejoicing that she recovered a lost faith.” [ICUR 2: 130]

The next pope, John I [523–526], soon found himself embroiled in a dispute between kings. The Byzantine rulers, determined to bring about religious unity, had ordered that churches held by Arians be handed over to Catholics, and pressured Arians to convert. Those measures didn’t sit well with Theodoric [493–526], the Arian king of Italy who ruled at Ravenna. Theodoric, who considered himself a protector of the Arians, threatened reprisals against Catholics in Italy unless the Byzantines repealed the anti-Arian measures. He sent to Constantinople a high level delegation including members of the aristocracy and the pope himself. Summoned to Ravenna, the new pope agreed to try to make the Byzantines return the churches, but he drew the line at negotiating the return of *converted Arians* back to their old religion. To give buildings back to the Arians was one thing. To deliver souls back to heresy was quite another. [MGH, *Auctores Antiquissimi* 9: 328]

Pope John received a magnificent reception at Constantinople. A Latin account, the anonymous Valesian chronicle, declares that Emperor Justin went out to meet the pope “as if he were the apostle Peter himself.” [MGH, *Auctores Antiquissimi* 9: 328] Marcellinus, another Latin chronicler, adds that the pope celebrated mass according to the Roman rite. [PL 68, 941]

A later Merovingian account, *Gesta Theoderici Regis*, claims that Emperor Justin prostrated himself before the “blessed pope,” who crowned the Byzantine sovereign. The same source describes the emperor’s joy because “in his time, he merited to receive in his kingdom the vicar of Blessed Peter.” [MGH, *Script. Rerum Merov.* 2: 209]

Theodoric had been extremely suspicious about Byzantine intrigue, real or alleged, and had put to death two dignitaries, Symmachus and the famous scholar Boethius, for supposed high treason. Pope John was the king’s next victim. When he returned to Ravenna, the pope was thrown into prison. He died in May 526. [MGH, *Auctores Antiquissimi* 9: 328]

St. John I's successor, Felix IV [526–530], fearing instability in the Apostolic See, named as his successor the archdeacon Boniface, who was soon consecrated as Boniface II [530–532]. However, sixty priests voted for a Greek named Dioscorus, who was also consecrated. Dioscorus died after a few weeks, leaving Boniface II in undisputed possession of the Apostolic See. Boniface drew up a severe decree against Dioscorus and forced the clergy to sign it. [Mommsen, *Neues Archiv* 11: 367–8]

The epitaph of Boniface II calls him “a soldier of the Apostolic See from his earliest days,” who later became “a bishop sacred in the entire world...” [Diehl, *Inscriptiones Latinae Christianae Veteres* 1: 185]

At Constantinople, A Flagrant Usurpation of Authority

When a former warrior named Stephen was elected bishop of Larissa and metropolitan of Thessaly, certain accusers, contesting the election, referred the case to Patriarch Epiphanius at Constantinople. Alleging that Stephen had violated the canons, Epiphanius attempted to remove him, while Stephen appealed to “the most venerable father of fathers and universal patriarch,” Pope Boniface II.

Stephen's appeal letters, recorded in a Roman council of 531, relate that in the distress of his heart, he had appealed to Pope Boniface “because no ecclesiastical order can exceed that authority of yours, which was conferred on you by the Savior of all, and first shepherd.” After God, Stephen continued, Peter was the “Father and Doctor of your holy [Roman] Church, and of the whole world.” [Mansi 8: 741]

Stephen explained that he had been legitimately elected by the people and clergy of the province, but certain accusers had denounced him to Patriarch Epiphanius of Constantinople, who attempted to depose him. Ignoring these accusers, Stephen informed the synod, “looking to the laws of the holy Church, and to the principality of the holy churches which has been handed down to you... I said that you were the masters of this examination, making a memorial of your holy head, and of the Apostolic See...” Adding that “to you... God has given it to judge,” Stephen reminded the pope, “for

this is your office, most blessed one, by day and by night to guard the laws and constitutions of the holy fathers, *and of your apostolic see, in all the Churches*, especially in your province of Illyricum.” [Mansi 8: 743–4]

In another letter to the council, Stephen remarked:

It behooves the Apostolic See both to hear and to terminate cases in our province... [I implore] the apostolic see of your holy and blessed head both that the custom which up to now has prevailed in our province be left intact, and entreated that the authority of the Apostolic See, given by the Lord... and the sacred canons, and observed by ancient custom, not be violated in any way... [Mansi 8: 745–6]

Complaining that the patriarch of Constantinople was trying to become master and judge of the churches of Thessaly, Stephen added:

Wherefore I made entreaty that the sentence not be pronounced until the acts be referred to you... For I said that the authority of the Apostolic See, which was given by God to the supreme apostle, exceeds the privileges of all the holy churches, in whose confession rest all the churches of the world. [Mansi 8: 746]

The conciliar acts contain another letter by Stephen and two other bishops of his province. Complaining of usurpations by Epiphanius and his synod, the bishops wrote: “their endeavor is to make us miserable under the ordinance and rule of the holy church of the royal city... [Constantinople] ...we appeal to Your Beatitude, and through you, to the thrice-blessed apostle Peter... so that the God-loving man, [Bishop Stephen] who in contending for the right of the Apostolic See has evidently undergone such perils, may be restored to his office by apostolic authority.” [Mansi 8: 747–8]

Theodosius of Echinus, another bishop from the province of Thessaly, addressed the pope and council through an interpreter:

From the rereading of the complaints, Your Beatitude has

become aware of what was done contrary to the holy canons and ordinance of your predecessors. For although the Apostolic See rightly claims for itself the principality over the churches throughout the world, and to it alone is it necessary that appeals be addressed from every side in ecclesiastical cases, it is clear that the venerable pontiffs of your see claimed in a special way that the churches of Illyricum were subject to their government... [Mansi 8:748]

At the pope's command, a series of earlier papal letters was read, in which the popes had claimed or exercised jurisdiction in Illyricum, through their vicars. The outcome of the case is not known. [Mansi 8:749 sq.]

The Conference of 532

Hoping to reconcile monophysites with the Universal Church, in 532, Justinian arranged a conference at Constantinople where six bishops from each side— Catholic and monophysite— discussed their differences. According to an anonymous monophysite writer, Justinian asked the monophysite bishops to declare their conditions for reunion with the Church. The monophysites called for the condemnation of the Tome of Leo and the Council of Chalcedon, and demanded the abrogation of the Formula of Pope Hormisdas, adding: "It is necessary to suppress the *libelli* of the Romans, which have been subscribed by all the bishops who now occupy episcopal sees." Justinian clearly could not agree to these conditions. [PO 13: 194-5]

Innocent, bishop of Maronia, described the discussions, but from the Chalcedonian perspective, in a letter to the priest Thomas. Hypatius, bishop of Ephesus, spoke for the orthodox side; Innocent notes that he "became our mouthpiece, just as Blessed Peter, coryphaeus of the apostles..." When Hypatius asked the monophysites what they thought of Eutyches, on whose account the Council of Chalcedon had been called, they answered that Eutyches was a heretic, and an arch-heretic at that. Under further questioning from Hypatius, the monophysites admitted that the Second Council of Ephesus had been wrong to justify Eutyches, and that its acts

needed to be corrected by an ecumenical council. The monophysites even allowed that it was good and necessary to have convoked the Council of Chalcedon, if it had ended in a just way. [Mansi 8: 817-19]

In the next session, Hypatius asked the monophysites what grievances they had against the Council of Chalcedon. “Before everything else, the novelty of the two natures,” they answered. The monophysites felt that the doctrine of the two natures contradicted the teaching of the Fathers, citing Cyril of Alexandria, Athanasius, and other fathers, including two Roman bishops, Felix and Julius. Hypatius responded that the monophysite side was relying on Apollinarian forgeries. [Mansi 8: 820-22]

The monophysites had another grievance against the Council of Chalcedon: it had reinstated two bishops who, in their eyes, had Nestorian tendencies: Theodoret of Cyrus and Ibas of Edessa. When Hypatius reminded the monophysites that Theodoret and Ibas were received *after anathematizing Nestorius*, the monophysites questioned Theodoret’s sincerity. As for Ibas, the monophysites cited a letter he had written, or allegedly written, to a certain “Maris the Persian,” accusing St. Cyril of Alexandria of Apollinarianism. [Mansi 8: 829-30]

The monophysites seemed to be arguing that at Chalcedon, the Church had followed a double standard: while Dioscorus had been summarily condemned, Theodoret—who had publicly attacked St. Cyril and defended Nestorius—had gotten off with a virtual slap on the wrist. Admittedly Theodoret had had to anathematize his friend, Nestorius. Yet Theodoret was penalized no further, and the council had not even officially condemned his writings against Cyril. Where Monophysites and Nestorians were concerned, did the Chalcedonians have two weights and two measures? The monophysites certainly thought so.

Justinian redoubled his efforts to show that the orthodox abhorred Nestorianism as much as the monophysites. The *Code of Justinian*, his monumental compilation of Roman law, contains Justinian’s correspondence on this subject with the pope and patriarch of Constantinople. Many in monophysite circles considered the formula, “*One of the trinity suffered*” a

sort of touchstone of orthodoxy because it asserted very strongly the unity of person in Christ. Justinian continued trying to obtain Rome's approval for the formula, and informed his own patriarch of this campaign. On March 26, 533, Justinian wrote to Epiphanius of Constantinople:

Wishing that Your Holiness be informed of everything pertaining to ecclesiastical affairs, we have deemed it necessary to inform you by these present divine letters of matters of which you are already undoubtedly aware, namely that we have come across men still professing the error of Nestorius and of Eutyches, and that we have published an edict against the heretics, commanding in all things to preserve the unity of the holy churches with the most holy pope and patriarch of Old Rome, to whom we have written likewise. For we do not allow anything pertaining to ecclesiastical order not to be reported to His Beatitude, since he is head of all the holy priests of God, and because, as often as heretics have arisen in these parts, they have been condemned by the sentence and right judgment of that venerable throne... [*Codex Iustinianus* I 1, 7. Ed. P. Krueger, *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, Berlin 1882, Vol. II, 8]

On June 6, 533, Justinian wrote a letter to Pope John II [532-535], which was brought by two bishops, Hypatius of Ephesus and Demetrius of Philippi. The emperor remarked,

Rendering honor to the Apostolic See and to Your Holiness, which ever has been and is our desire, and honoring Your Beatitude as befits a father, we have hastened to bring whatever is related to the state of the churches to the knowledge of Your Holiness, because it has ever been our great care that the unity of your apostolic see, and the state of God's holy churches which has obtained up to now be preserved, without any contradiction. *And therefore we have hastened both to subject and to unite all the priests of the entire eastern district to the see of Your Holiness.* And therefore we

have deemed it necessary that now the issues raised here be brought to the knowledge of Your Holiness, although they are manifest and beyond question, and have always been firmly observed and preached by all priests, and in accordance with the doctrine of your holy see. For we do not allow anything pertaining to the state of the churches, no matter how manifest and unquestionable it may be, to fail to be brought to the knowledge of Your Holiness, who are head of all the holy churches. For in all respects, as has been said, we hasten to increase the honor and authority of your see. [*Codex Iustinianus* I 1, 8. *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, Berlin 1882, Vol. II, 11]

Certain unbelievers, Justinian explained, had dared to attack what is held by all priests “in accordance with your doctrine,” denying that our Lord Jesus Christ is one of the Holy Trinity. Contrasting this unbelief with the attitude of the clergy and monks of his empire, who “following Your Holiness [preserve] the unity of the holy churches of God, which they have from the apostolic see of Your Holiness,” Justinian reiterated his belief in the four ecumenical councils, making it clear that “all the priests so believe and confess and preach, following the doctrine of your apostolic see,” adding that “we have hastened to bring this to the knowledge of Your Holiness” through Bishops Hypatius and Demetrius. Further, “hastening to follow in all respects the Apostolic See of Your Beatitude,” Justinian asked the pope to signify by letters that Rome agreed with the orthodox faith of the empire but condemned the unbelief of the followers of Nestorius, and concluded:

...for in this way, both the love of all for you and the authority of your see shall increase, and the unity of the holy churches, which is unto you [sic], shall remain undisturbed, when through you all the most blessed bishops shall have learned... the genuine doctrine of Your Holiness. [*Codex Iustinianus* I 1, 8. *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, Berlin 1882, Vol. II, 11]

In March 534, Pope John II congratulated Justinian, writing:

Among the glorious praises of your wisdom and meekness, most Christian of princes, [is the fact that] you preserve the reverence due the See of Rome and subject everything to it, and bring them back to that unity whose author—that is, the first of the apostles—was commanded by the voice of the Lord: *Feed my sheep*. That this see is truly head of the Churches, both the rules of the Fathers and the statutes of princes declare... [*Codex Iustinianus* I 1, 8. *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, Berlin 1882, Vol. II, 10]

As for the emperor's profession of faith, the pope added, "we confirm it by our authority, because it is consistent with the apostolic doctrine"; and noting that the emperor was endorsing the faith confirmed both by "the doctrine of the Apostolic See, and the venerable authority of the holy fathers," the pope continued:

This is therefore your true faith, this your certain religion: this have all the fathers of blessed memory preached, (as we have said), and bishops of the Roman Church, whom we follow in all things, and this has the Apostolic See preached up to now, and kept unshaken: whoever contradicts this faith [separates] himself from holy communion [and] from the Catholic Church... [*Codex Iustinianus* I 1, 8. *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, Berlin 1882, Vol. II, 11-12]

The pope added that he had met the Acemete monk Cyrus, a defender of Nestorianism, but, unable to convert him, had excommunicated him, "for it is just that those who show no obedience to our statutes be banished from the Church." Naturally, if Cyrus showed signs of repentance, the pope wished that he receive mercy. Finally, the pope wished a long and peaceful reign for Justinian, "in this true religion and the unity and veneration of the Apostolic See, whose principality, as most Christian and pious [rulers], you preserve in all respects..." [*Codex Iustinianus* I 1, 8]

Half a century ago, the Acemetes, the renowned "Sleepless" monks legendary for perpetual prayer, had been Rome's greatest allies against a

heterodox emperor and patriarch. An Acemete monk had pinned the sentence of excommunication against Acacius, and more than one had suffered martyrdom in defense of the faith. Now the shoe was on the other foot: this time the emperor and patriarch were orthodox, and Pope John had the melancholy duty of excommunicating an Acemete monk. The pope even directed the senators not so much as to speak with the Acemetes. [Mansi 8: 803-06]

On a brighter note, Pope John received a letter from his disciple Cassiodorus, the senator turned monk who later devoted himself to copying manuscripts. Cassiodorus, who had just become Pretorian Prefect, requested the pope's prayers and counsel, adding:

Let that see, which is a thing of wonder throughout the world, cover its devotees with affection, which, although in general it has been given to the world, is also known and locally attributed to us... [PL 69: 828]

Passages about the Roman primacy appear not only in the *Code of Justinian*, but in the supplemental legislation known as 'Novellae.' In Novella 9, of April 535, Justinian decrees:

Old Rome has obtained the origin of laws, and nobody doubts that the apex of the supreme pontificate lies with her. Thus we have deemed it necessary to honor the fatherland of laws and font of the priesthood by a special ordinance of Our divine letters... which Our Eternity, in honor of Almighty God, has dedicated to the venerable see of the supreme apostle, Peter... [Ed. G.E. Heimbach. *Authenticum. Novellarum Constitutionum Iustiniani Versio Vulgata*. Leipzig 1851, 1: 124-5]

A Pope Deposes a Patriarch

Pope John II was succeeded by the archdeacon Agapetus [535-536], who came from a family that included two other strong popes: Felix

III and Gregory the Great. Like many popes before and after him, Agapetus became embroiled in Italian and Byzantine politics. Under severe pressure from Byzantine arms, Theodahat, the Gothic king, sent Pope Agapetus to Constantinople to secure peace with Justinian. The pope died at Constantinople in April 536. The Byzantine Menologion of Basil the Macedonian commemorates Pope Agapetus as a saint on April 17. [PG 117: 408-9]

While Pope Agapetus was at Constantinople, he found that Anthimus, the new bishop of Constantinople, was a monophysite heretic. At the request of many eastern monks and clergy, he held a council, deposed Anthimus, and consecrated the priest Menas as the new archbishop of Constantinople. A monophysite source, the *Chronicle* of Patriarch Michael the Syrian [1166-1199] records that Agapetus deposed Anthimus “as if by his own authority, and established in his place a man from Alexandria named Menas.” [Bk IX, 22. Ed. J. Chabot, 2: 202]

Realizing that he had been duped by Anthimus, Justinian had to eat crow. The emperor, and for that matter the new bishop, Menas, signed a variation of the Formula of Pope Hormisdas, which began:

The first condition of salvation is to keep the rule of the true faith, and in no way to deviate from the tradition of the fathers, because the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ cannot be overlooked, which says: “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I shall build my Church.” These things, which have been said, are proven by the events, for in the Apostolic See the Catholic religion is always preserved inviolate... [CSEL 35: 338-9]

The formula signed by Justinian also included this clause regarding the pope:

...following in all things the Apostolic See, we preach whatever it has laid down, and profess that these things shall be observed inviolably, and shall compel all the bishops to

act in accordance with the content of this *libellus*: the patriarchs to Your Holiness, and metropolitans to the patriarchs, and the rest to their own metropolitans, so that our Catholic Church may have her solidity in all respects. [CSEL 35: 340]

The emperor's profession of faith includes a clause "approving in all respects and embracing all the letters of Leo, of blessed memory, which he wrote concerning the Christian faith." [CSEL 35: 339]

The formula signed by Menas reads:

...following in all things the Apostolic See, we preach whatever has been laid down by it... I Menas, by the mercy of God a priest... receive... the four holy synods, and whatever is contained in them, [and] the teachings and letters of Pope Leo, which he wrote for the faith... [CSEL 35: 342]

In Novella 43, of 536, Justinian condemned Anthimus and the deposed patriarch's collaborators: Severus, Peter and the monk Zoaras, noting that Anthimus had been deposed first by Agapetus of holy memory, and by the council. [Ed. G.E. Heimbach. *Authenticum. Novellarum Constitutionum Iustiniani Versio Vulgata*, 1: 450 sq.]

A brief contemporary account, describing how Pope Agapetus expelled Anthimus and his accomplices from the Church, adds that when the clergy presented Menas to be ordained, Pope Agapetus required that Menas present a *libellus* or profession of faith, which the pope, at Rome, intended to present at the tomb of Blessed Peter the apostle. When Menas complied, the account continues, he was ordained by the "prince of all the bishops." [A.S. 45: 179]

In 536, Menas held a council at Constantinople to clear the air. Early in the proceedings, the late pope's legates mentioned the appeals which various eastern monks and clergy had sent to Agapetus. A notary read one, from the monks of Constantinople and Jerusalem to the "most

holy and most blessed archbishop of Old Rome, and ecumenical patriarch Agapetus.” [Mansi 8: 896 sq.]

After complaining of the machinations and bad faith of the monophysite heretics, who were raising altar against altar and baptistery against baptistery— a reference to illicit baptisms performed in private homes—the monks observed that, as the most merciful God had sent Peter, head of the apostles, to depose Simon Magus, “so also He has sent you for the deposition and expulsion of [monophysite leaders] Severus, Peter, Zoaras and those who think like them.” The monks urged Agapetus,

...to do what Saint Celestine did against Nestorius, assigning to him [Anthimus] a limit, just as [Celestine] did with Nestorius, within which, unless he offers [an orthodox] *libellus* to your apostolic see, and to Your Beatitude, and to the most holy archbishop of the royal city, and frees himself from the disease of heresy... you most holy ones may decree him to be stripped of all pontifical dignity... and submit him to the condemnation of the heretics already mentioned. [Mansi 8: 900-04]

Orthodox bishops of the east had also appealed to Agapetus, reminding him that Christ “entrusted to your venerable head the throne of the head of the apostles.” Complaining that the heretics had filled the world with invalid anathemas, and even accused the orthodox of being Nestorians— a standard bit of rhetoric with Monophysites— the bishops asked Agapetus to sentence Anthimus. [Mansi 8: 914-18]

The synodal acts contain a letter of Pope Agapetus to Patriarch Peter of Jerusalem, informing him of the deposition of Anthimus. The pope described how, upon his arrival at Constantinople, he had found the patriarchal chair usurped by Anthimus in violation of the canons. To make matters worse, Anthimus had turned out to be a monophysite heretic. Agapetus warned Peter to avoid anyone condemned by the Apostolic See for similar contumacy. The pope recommended the new bishop, Menas, a virtuous cleric elected with the consent of the entire clergy and people,

adding that Menas had one other distinction to his name: “since the time of Peter the apostle, no other eastern church has ever received a bishop ordained at the hands of our see.” [Mansi 8: 921–4]

Peter of Jerusalem concurred. Citing the four ecumenical councils, the Tome of Leo, the decree of “Agapetus, of holy and blessed memory,” and the concurrent sentence of Menas, Peter agreed with the deposition of Anthimus, who had been exposed as a wolf in sheep’s clothing. [Mansi 8: 1169–72]

Patriarch Menas took the floor, remarking that the Great Apostolic See’s zeal on behalf of the faith and the canons, and its spirit of mercy, were not surprising, “wherefore we too, fulfilling what has been given by the most holy pope in his synodal epistle, have appointed for him [i.e., Anthimus] a time for repentance.” Anthimus was given three days to appear before the synod to clear himself. [Mansi 8: 925–6]

In his own sentence, Patriarch Menas noted that Anthimus had already merited condemnation by “Agapetus of holy memory, pope of Old Rome,” and could not withstand the scrutiny; according to Menas, Anthimus had supported monophysitism and embraced individuals “deposed and anathematized by the holy and ecumenical council of Chalcedon, and by the Apostolic See.” The deacons from Rome and the Italian bishops also professed to “follow in every respect the sentence of our father of holy memory, Pope Agapetus, against Anthimus.” [Mansi 8: 959–62]

This same Council of Constantinople, in 536, also passed sentence against Anthimus, observing:

...he promised to do whatever the pontiff of the great apostolic see would decide, and wrote to the most holy patriarchs that he would follow the Apostolic See in every respect. But our great God and Savior Jesus Christ did not allow such things to go on; to this royal city Agapetus, the most blessed pope of holy and blessed memory was sent, who... deposed him from a see which did not belong to

him... we consider him an altogether useless and rotten member, to be cut off from the body of God's holy churches... foreign to every sacred dignity and authority, in accordance with the sentence of the most blessed pope himself... [Mansi 8: 963-6]

Menas, in his own sentence against Anthimus, echoed the voice of the synod:

Indeed Agapetus of holy memory, pope of Old Rome, giving him time for repentance until he should receive whatever the holy fathers defined, did not allow him to be called either a priest or a Catholic... as Your Love is aware, we follow and obey the apostolic throne; we are in communion with those with whom it is in communion, and we condemn those whom it condemns. [Mansi 8: 968-70]

The acts of the council include appeals to Justinian and Menas from the monasteries of Jerusalem and Second Syria. Invoking the memory of Popes Leo and Hormisdas, the monks complained of the excesses of Severus of Antioch, the monophysite leader, and his disciple Peter. Signers of these letters included Paul, a deacon and legate of St. Maron, "principal venerable monastery of Second Syria." [Mansi 8: 996, 1021]

The westerners pointed out that Severus had been condemned long ago, producing a letter of Pope Hormisdas to the clergy and faithful of Second Syria, and the same pope's letter to Patriarch Epiphanius, giving instructions for reconciliation of the eastern clergy. [Mansi 8: 1023-36]

The Byzantine Church commemorated Menas as a saint on August 24. The Menologion of Basil Porphyrogenitus recorded how he had been ordained by Pope Agapetus, who had driven out and anathematized the heretic Anthimus. [PG 117: 604]

A Pope Thrown to the Wolves

Pope Agapetus died in Constantinople, in April 536. His successor Silverius [536–537], son of the late Pope Hormisdas, quickly became the victim of a political struggle between the Goths and Byzantines. When the Byzantine general Belisarius captured Rome, Pope Silverius— who in Byzantine circles was widely suspected of loyalty to the Goths— was accused of treason, defrocked and led into exile. With Silverius out of the way, the deacon Vigilius [537–555] was elected and consecrated to succeed him; Silverius was sent as far away as Patara in Lycia.

The cruel treatment of Pope Silverius did not go without protest. The bishop of Patara, warning Justinian of God’s judgment for the exile of Silverius, declared: “In this world there are many kings, not one, like that pope who is over the church of the whole world.” [Liberatus, *Breviarium*, 22. PL 68: 1040]

Taken aback by this rebuke, Justinian resolved to bring Silverius back to Rome and reexamine his alleged treason. If Silverius were proven innocent, the emperor was prepared to restore him to his see; otherwise Silverius could live elsewhere as a simple bishop. Silverius, however, never made it back to Rome. Ill-nourished and imprisoned at the island of Palmaria, he died shortly afterwards. The Church honors him as a martyr. [PL 68: 1040–41]

Vigilius was in undisputed possession of the Apostolic See. Had he reached that station with a clear conscience? Not according to contemporary accounts, some of which condemn him for conspiring against Pope Silverius. Certain African writers, convinced that Vigilius betrayed the faith by accepting the fifth ecumenical council [553], went further.

The deacon Liberatus of Carthage accused Vigilius of complicity with heresy. Allegedly Vigilius had reached an understanding with Empress Theodora, a monophysite sympathizer, to restore the heretic Patriarch Anthimus, in return for money and the promotion to the Apostolic See. [PL 68: 1039–42]

An African bishop, Victor of Tunnunum, wrote in a *Chronicle* that Vigilius was “made pope” by the patrician Antonia, wife of Belisarius. Victor also claimed that Vigilius was compelled to write to the monophysite patriarchs Theodosius of Alexandria, Anthimus of Constantinople and Severus of Antioch, who were “long ago condemned by the Apostolic See.” [PL 68: 956–7]

In spite of his wrongful deeds and alleged complicity with heresy, however, Pope Vigilius was publicly orthodox. On September 17, 540 he wrote to Justinian, thanking the emperor for having forwarded an orthodox profession of faith. Vigilius praised Justinian’s respect for [Popes] Celestine and Leo, who had condemned every heresy “by the divine dispensation granted to them,” and “laid down what all Christians must universally follow, by a law destined to endure forever.” Vigilius pledged to uphold, with all his strength, the praiseworthy constitutions of his predecessors, Popes Hormisdas, John and Agapetus of holy memory, reminding Justinian that “bishops who have not inviolably observed the constitutions of the aforesaid bishops of the Apostolic See are not deemed to be worthy.” [Mansi 9: 35–6]

In the same letter, Vigilius upheld in every respect the authority of the four ecumenical councils and the dogmatic letters of Pope Leo, and whatever had been venerably defined by his predecessors, anathematizing opponents of sound doctrine “by the approved authority of the Apostolic See.” Vigilius praised Patriarch Menas of Constantinople for having professed the orthodox faith to Pope Agapetus, and for having condemned a long list of heretics. Embracing these measures against heresy, Vigilius confirmed them “by the authority of the Apostolic See,” expressing hope that Justinian would respect the privileges of the Apostolic See, and consult it in questions involving the empire’s welfare. [Mansi 9: 36–8]

On the same day, Pope Vigilius wrote to Patriarch Menas, praising him for upholding the four ecumenical councils and especially for following in all respects “the constitutions of our blessed predecessor, Leo.” “What is more honorable to Your Charity,” Vigilius asked, “than not to deviate from the doctrine of the bishops of Rome?” Vigilius multiplied his exhortations that Menas faithfully observe the venerable constitutions of Pope Leo of

blessed memory. [Mansi 9: 38–40]

The Affair of the Three Chapters

At the conference of 532, Justinian had listened attentively to the monophysites' grievances against the Council of Chalcedon. Monophysites felt that the Council of Chalcedon had been overly indulgent to Theodoret and Ibas—two adversaries of St. Cyril of Alexandria. Monophysites wanted the Church to condemn Theodoret's writings against St. Cyril, and a letter of Ibas to a certain "Maris," a letter which had betrayed pro-Nestorian sentiments. Monophysites also wanted the condemnation of the person and works of Theodore, bishop of Mopsuestia, who in their opinion was the originator of the Nestorian heresy.

Justinian had thought long and hard about the monophysites' demands. If Theodoret, at the Council of Chalcedon, had been required to condemn Nestorius before being reinstated, what prevented the Church from condemning pro-Nestorian writings?

As for Theodore of Mopsuestia, many theologians were uneasy about the idea of condemning a dead man who apparently had died in communion with the Church. On the other hand, if, as monophysites contended, Theodore really was responsible for the Nestorian heresy, why shouldn't he be condemned? Why should the Church be prevented from achieving a historic reconciliation of the monophysites, out of consideration for a dead heretic?

A whirlwind was about to begin, which historians call the controversy about *the Three Chapters*. Three entities were proposed for condemnation: 1) Theodoret's writings against St. Cyril of Alexandria. 2) The incriminated letter of Ibas to "Maris." 3) The person and works of Theodore of Mopsuestia, "father of Nestorianism."

What was the significance, and what were the merits of condemning the Three Chapters? At this stage, two different views were widespread among theologians. The first view saw the condemnation as a back door

attempt to weaken the decrees of Chalcedon. Why should the Church suddenly pick on three dead men, particularly the venerable prelates Theodoret and Ibas? Obviously, to please the monophysites and to undermine the faith of the great Council. Broadly speaking, this view was prevalent in the West.

There was another way of looking at the proposed condemnation of the Three Chapters. The condemnation could be considered as the Church's solemn guarantee that she abhorred equally the Eutychian and Nestorian heresies. The Church played no favorites among her children, and to prove it, she would condemn doctrinally defective writings even if their authors were such prelates as Theodoret and Ibas. By condemning the Three Chapters, the Church would show that she practiced equal justice against both the monophysite and Nestorian heresies. This was the view that Justinian accepted.

An Eloquent Protest

Many western theologians had serious reservations about condemning the Three Chapters. Such an action, they reasoned, was tantamount to retracting, revising, or at any rate amending the decrees of the Council of Chalcedon. African theologians were even composing works *In Defense of the Three Chapters*. Fulgentius Ferrandus, a deacon of Carthage, was a conscientious objector to the condemnation of the Three Chapters, reasoning that it amounted to a revision of Chalcedon. Ferrandus used an argument from authority, invoking the primacy of the Roman Pontiff, and the irreformable nature of ecumenical councils, particularly Chalcedon. Consulted by a certain Severus from Constantinople, Ferrandus replied:

Most prudent sir, if you wish to hear any truth ask principally the bishop of the Apostolic See, whose sound doctrine stands up by the judgment of truth and is sustained by the strength of authority. [PL 67: 911]

Writing to the Roman deacons Pelagius and Anatolius, Ferrandus reiterated his concerns, defending the ecumenicity of the Council of

Chalcedon:

The Apostolic See was there in her legates, *holding the primacy of the universal Church*, there were the pontiffs of the other venerable sees, wise as serpents, simple as doves... [PL 67: 924]

Ferrandus evokes the spectre of the slippery slope: today it is Chalcedon; tomorrow, he suggests, even the *Council of Nicea* may be open to revision:

I must say: if the decrees of the Council of Chalcedon be retracted, let us think about the Council of Nicea, lest it undergo a similar peril. Universal Councils, especially those that have received the consent of the Roman Church, *have a place of authority second to the canonical books*... [PL 67: 926]

Facundus, bishop of Hermiane, in his own *Defense of the Three Chapters*, followed much the same line of argumentation. Citing Pope Leo dozens of times, Facundus claimed, regarding the proposed condemnation, that “supporters of heretics have wrought this, to bring to naught the great council and the decrees of Pope Leo,” “to make void the decrees of the synod of Chalcedon and the letter of Pope Leo... but Blessed Leo, a faithful and trustful warrior for the Church... so says that all things were defined there, as to confirm that nothing could be added to perfect them...” [PL 67: 560, 575]

Justinian’s Relentless Quest

Notwithstanding the objections, Justinian had made up his mind. He promulgated a decree condemning the Three Chapters, and determined to make the patriarchs subscribe to it. Menas was the first domino to fall. Originally hesitant about the decree, he swallowed his objections, signed, and was promptly upbraided by the deacon Stephen, papal representative in Constantinople, who complained that Menas had broken a promise to do nothing about the controversy “without the Apostolic See.” Stung by

Keys Over the Christian World

the criticism, Menas declared that he had signed on condition that he could retract his signature if the bishop of Rome disapproved—a condition which had been guaranteed by an oath made to Menas. [Facundus, *Def. Trium Cap.* IV, 4. PL 67: 625]

The floodgates were open. Peter, bishop of Jerusalem, also signed, but under protest. Ephrem, bishop of Antioch, initially refused, but eventually signed under threat of deposition. Zoilus of Alexandria signed, but sent a messenger into Sicily offering similar excuses. Later on, when they met face to face in Constantinople, Vigilius rebuked Zoilus in public. Facundus of Hermiane adds that “the bishops of the other cities” also signed, but gave Stephen written declarations that they had been forced to do so by the bishop of Constantinople. [PL 67: 626]

That left Pope Vigilius, whose resistance to the emperor was supported by the vast body of western bishops. Justinian determined to bring him to Constantinople. The pope was forcibly brought to the royal city, reaching Constantinople in early 547.

By all accounts Vigilius, before his elevation to the Apostolic See, had been a veritable scoundrel, but as he entered the crucible of suffering, even he tried to preserve a certain dignity. Determined to resist unjust pressure, he urged Justinian to withdraw the edict about the Three Chapters, and after enduring rough treatment, he put Justinian to shame, publicly, with the words: “*Although you hold me captive, you cannot make the blessed apostle Peter a captive.*” [Mansi 9: 153]

For over a year, Justinian tried to make Vigilius subscribe to the decree condemning the Three Chapters, but the coveted signature seemed to elude the emperor’s grasp. Finally, on Holy Saturday, April 11, 548, Vigilius promulgated the *Judicatum*, addressed to Patriarch Menas. Only fragments of this decision survive. The pope condemned the person and works of Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret’s writings against Cyril, and the letter of Ibas to Maris. [Mansi 9: 104–5, 181]

A letter of the Italian clergy in the pope’s entourage added that

Vigilius had acted “under a certain dispensation, carefully warning that the Council [of Chalcedon] should not suffer any injury from this occasion.” [Mansi 9: 153]

Vigilius had given Justinian everything the emperor had wanted. The reaction was stunning: the African episcopate *synodically excommunicated Vigilius*, until the pope repented for having condemned the Three Chapters. [PL 68: 958]

Shortly after 548, Rusticus and Sebastian, two deacons in the pope’s entourage, also defected. Rusticus, who considered himself a defender of the faith against the monophysites, wrote a treatise against them. Although in rebellion against Pope Vigilius, Rusticus called himself a deacon of the “supreme church of the entire universe,” citing against the monophysites the authority of Popes Celestine [422–432], Sixtus III [432–440] and Leo; Rusticus tried to show, for instance, that St. Cyril had endeavored to have the letters on reconciliation with John of Antioch confirmed by Pope Sixtus. [PL 67: 1170, 1176]

As for Pope Vigilius, with the threat of a western schism imminent, he apparently proposed an ecumenical council. Justinian allowed Vigilius to withdraw the *Judicatum*, and the pope declared that until the council was held, any bishop who took action regarding the Three Chapters would be excommunicated by the Apostolic See. [Mansi 9: 153]

Meanwhile, Justinian continued the pressure. Reparatus, primate of Carthage, went to Constantinople with some other African bishops, but when he could not be forced to condemn the Three Chapters, he was accused of treason and sent into exile. Justinian publicly promulgated a confession of faith, justifying the condemnation of the Three Chapters. Vigilius reacted vigorously. He uttered this threat for bishops who contravened his instructions: “*Know that you, as prevaricators, have been suspended, through the ministry of my voice, from the communion of the see of Blessed Peter the apostle.*” [Letter *Dum in Sanctae*, and *Epistola legatis Francorum*, Mansi 9: 51, 153–4]

The persecution against Vigilius intensified. In August 551, the

Keys Over the Christian World

emperor tried to remove Vigilius, who with the bishop of Milan had taken refuge in the church of St. Peter in Hormisda. Vigilius decided to take flight. Two days before Christmas 551, he escaped to Chalcedon and took his stand in the church of St. Euphemia—the very place where the Council of Chalcedon had been held, a century earlier. [Letter *Dum in sanctae*, Mansi 9: 50–55]

Under increasing imperial pressure, in early February 552 Pope Vigilius wrote a letter *Dum in sanctae*, informing the Church of the sufferings he had endured for months. Proclaiming that his faith was that of the four ecumenical councils, and of his predecessors in the Apostolic See, the beleaguered pope asked God to grant His peace to the Church. Until then, Vigilius proclaimed, he would not leave his place of refuge at St. Euphemia's. [Mansi 9: 50–55]

The pope also revealed the condemnation of Theodore Askidas, bishop of Caesarea, who was widely believed to have instigated the persecution. After Askidas had broken the agreement to keep silence about the Three Chapters until the upcoming ecumenical council, Vigilius pronounced this sentence against him:

...You have despised the authority of the Apostolic See which issued a prohibition through us...as if it were nothing for you to show contempt for the bishop of the first see contradicting you in person... Meanwhile, we keep silence about the other things perpetrated by you on the same day to the detriment of the Apostolic See and of the canons... [Mansi 9: 60]

In view of these considerations, Pope Vigilius, “in the person and by the authority of Blessed Peter the apostle, whose place we bear, however lowly,” deposed Theodore from the episcopate and all Catholic communion; the pope also broke communion with Menas and any other bishops guilty of conniving with Theodore, until each bishop “erased his guilt by due satisfaction before us.” Vigilius even had the condemnation publicly posted in Constantinople. [Mansi 9: 60–61]

To reconcile themselves with the pope, Menas, Askidas and the other eastern bishops offered a profession of faith declaring their adherence to the four ecumenical councils. The bishops offered these guarantees:

...we promise that we will follow, across the board and in all respects, unshakeably, inviolably, blamelessly and irreversibly, without any addition or subtraction, whatever was... defined or judged, or laid down or disposed in all the acts of the Council of Chalcedon and the other... synods, both with regard to faith and all other cases by common consent with the legates and vicars of the Apostolic See, in which, according to their respective times, the predecessors of Your Holiness, the most blessed popes of Old Rome, presided... We venerate and receive as orthodox whatever was said there by common consent with the legates and vicars of the orthodox Apostolic See. Whatever they anathematized or condemned we also anathematize and condemn; and whatever things are read to have been judged, or defined, or constituted or disposed, we preserve irreversibly and unchangeably as they were [so done] by the same synods by common consent with the vicars of the Apostolic See... We also promise that we will follow and preserve in all respects the letters of Pope Leo of blessed memory, and the constitutions of the Apostolic See which have come forth either with regard to the faith or the confirmation of the aforesaid four councils... I have indeed made no *libellus* against the constitution of the pious emperor and of Your Holiness about the case of the Three Chapters, concerning which controversy has arisen, but I will and consent that any such papers should be returned to Your Beatitude... Regarding whatever injuries were done to Your Beatitude or your See, I did not indeed commit them, but because it is necessary to hasten in every way to bring about peace in the church, I ask pardon as if I had done them. And because, in the time of discord, I received into communion men who were excommunicated or not received by Your Beatitude, I ask

pardon in like manner... [Mansi 9: 62-3]

The Fifth Ecumenical Council

The fifth ecumenical council opened at Constantinople, in early May 553; acts of the first session show that only a handful of the approximately 150 bishops present were Latins. [ACO IV, Vol. 1, 3-7]

Exhausted, ailing, and ignorant of Greek, Pope Vigilius—who would have preferred a western venue such as Italy or Sicily, and the participation of Latin prelates—had in the *Constitutum* requested a twenty day delay, so that he could give his sentence in writing. [Mansi 9: 65]

In the pope's absence, the Council of Constantinople went ahead, with Eutychius, the new patriarch of Constantinople, presiding. Proceedings began with a letter from Justinian. Reminding the bishops how he had questioned them about the Three Chapters, and praised them for condemning such impieties, Justinian warned that defenders of the Three Chapters still existed. As for Vigilius, "the most religious Pope of Old Rome," Justinian continued, we questioned him [sic!] on the Three Chapters when he arrived at Constantinople: he anathematized them once, twice, and on even more occasions..." [ACO IV, Vol. 1, 11]

Apart from the Orwellian use of language—"we questioned him..."—Justinian had made his point. The eastern bishops and patriarchs had condemned the Three Chapters. Vigilius had done so not once, but several times. The intended inference was clear: why was Vigilius dragging his feet now, and obstructing the work of the ecumenical council?

Led by Eutychius of Constantinople, the eastern bishops and patriarchs sent Vigilius a letter containing this reassurance:

We receive and embrace the letters of the bishops of the apostolic see of Rome written concerning the true faith, both those of the others and those of Leo, of holy memory... we ask that, with Your Beatitude presiding over us, the same

Chapters may be proposed for a common examination and discussion... [Mansi 9: 187]

Vigilius, notwithstanding the letter, refused to come to the council. On May 6, the patriarchs of Constantinople, Antioch and Alexandria solemnly requested him to come, but he still refused. The next day, before another imperial delegation, Vigilius continued to refuse to attend the council. [Mansi 9: 189 sq.]

The bishops went ahead and examined the question of the Three Chapters. Within a month, they were finished: in fourteen solemn anathematisms, the council condemned the Three Chapters. [ACO IV, Vol. 1, 215 sq.]

Pope Vigilius had given his own decision in the *Constitutum*, dated May 14, 553. Vigilius had condemned sixty propositions of Theodore of Mopsuestia, and anathematized anybody who agreed with them. However, Vigilius, unwilling to pass sentence on a dead man, did not condemn the person of Theodore. The pope also refused to condemn Theodoret and Ibas, whom the Council of Chalcedon had cleared of all suspicion of Nestorianism—a decision which had been made “with the consent of the Apostolic See.” Finally, Vigilius forbade any ecclesiastic from saying, writing or publishing anything contrary to the *Constitutum*. [Mansi 9: 61 sq.]

Pope Vigilius offered his decision to the imperial representatives. They answered that if Vigilius was willing to come and undertake a common examination of the Three Chapters together with the bishops and patriarchs, “we will consider you as head, as our father, and as first.” If not, Vigilius could use one of his own clerics to bring his response to Justinian. [Mansi 9: 347–9]

The subdeacon Servus dei submitted the *Constitutum* to Justinian, who was not interested. If Vigilius has condemned the Three Chapters, the emperor answered, we have no need of that—he has already done so; on the other hand, if Vigilius *defends* the Three Chapters, he has contradicted himself—how can we receive his paper? [Mansi 9: 349–50]

Keys Over the Christian World

Justinian forwarded to the council *six* different documents in which, he claimed, Vigilius... had condemned the Three Chapters, including:

1. A profession of faith to the emperor, where Vigilius condemns the Chapters, but adds: "I demand the rights which have been given by God to my see." [ACO IV, 1: 187]

2. Another profession of faith, where Vigilius adds once again: "As for the rights which have been given to our see by God, I have neither conceded them nor do I concede them, but as long as I live I demand the just rights of my see." [ACO IV, Vol. 1, 188]

3. An oath in which Vigilius, in the presence of Theodore Askidas and the patrician Cethegus, swears to condemn the Three Chapters, while Justinian promises to protect Vigilius and the privileges of the Roman Church, *and* to keep the pope's commitments secret. [ACO IV, Vol. 1, 198-9]

Justinian also wrote to the council, condemning the vacillations of Vigilius. When the Pope of Old Rome first came to Constantinople, Justinian declared, he had examined the Three Chapters and condemned them in writing. He had taken a written oath to persevere in this resolution, and to attempt nothing contrary to this condemnation. He had renewed this condemnation orally, before imperial officials and bishops, some of whom were present in the council. He had persevered in those sentiments for seven years. He had agreed, with the bishops, to condemn the Chapters in a council. Now, Justinian continued, Vigilius had disavowed his former sentiments, adopting those of the defenders of Nestorius and of Theodore of Mopsuestia. Declaring that Vigilius had separated himself from the Catholic Church, Justinian announced that the pope's name was removed from the diptychs, "lest we be found in communion with the impiety of Nestorius and Theodore..." The emperor added this proviso: "As for unity with the Apostolic See, we both keep it and it is certain that you shall keep it..." [ACO IV, Vol. 1, 202]

With relations between Rome and Constantinople at a low point,

Justinian essayed a famous distinction. Breaking with Vigilius, the *sedens* or occupant of the chair of Old Rome, Justinian claimed to remain in union with the *sedes* or Apostolic See. The council accepted the letter of Justinian, adding: “Let us therefore keep unity with the apostolic see of Old Rome, carrying out everything according to the content of the letters read...” [ACO IV, Vol. 1, 202]

After six months, Vigilius finally agreed to subscribe to the council. On December 8, 553, he wrote to Patriarch Eutychius of Constantinople. Reaffirming his fidelity to the four ecumenical councils, Vigilius condemned the Three Chapters and anybody who would defend them. The pope recognized the eastern bishops as his brothers and colleagues, and citing the example of St. Augustine, retracted whatever he had previously written in defense of the Three Chapters. On February 23, 554, Vigilius promulgated another *Constitutum*, condemning the Three Chapters. [Mansi 9: 413–20; 455–88]

The pope had made peace with Justinian, the council, and the eastern bishops. Although Vigilius was free to go, he never saw Rome again. He died on the return journey.

A Pope on the Defensive

Pope Vigilius was succeeded by the deacon Pelagius, who had been involved in every significant piece of papal business for the last twenty years. As he made his way back to Rome, Pelagius found that suspicions were high that he had somehow compromised the faith of Chalcedon.

As a deacon, Pelagius had written a treatise opposing the fifth ecumenical council. In general the condemnation of the Three Chapters, Pelagius had reasoned, undermined the authority of Pope Leo and the Council of Chalcedon. Pelagius had also shown scruples about the condemnation of a dead man, Theodore of Mopsuestia. Citing letters of Popes Leo the Great [440–461] and Gelasius [492–496], Pelagius had maintained that the condemnation of a dead man was against the rule of the Church. Pelagius had even cited a passage from his predecessor, Pope

Keys Over the Christian World

Vigilius, that “the universal church, and especially the Apostolic See, to which our God gave in a special way the principality and authority of binding and loosing,” never condemned dead men who had died at peace with the Church. [*Pelagii Diaconi Ecclesiae Romani in Defensione Trium Capitulorum*, Vatican City 1932, 13–15]

The new pope quickly reassured the people of his orthodoxy. Pelagius made a profession of faith, committing himself to uphold all the councils, particularly Chalcedon, adding that he accepted the letters of his predecessors from Celestine to Agapetus, condemning whomever they had condemned and venerating whomever they had accepted, especially the venerable bishops Theodore and Ibas. To remove all doubt, Pelagius went so far as to address his profession of faith “to the entire people of God.” [PL 69: 399–400]

Not only was Gaul uneasy about the results of the fifth council; in Africa protests were still being penned about Vigilius and his successor. Parts of Italy were in open schism, notably Tuscany, Milan and Istria with its metropolis of Aquileia.

The pope had a serious warning: “whoever is divided from the apostolic sees,” he wrote, “is unquestionably in schism, and raises an altar against the Universal Church.” Those who had doubts about the fifth council, he added, “ought to have chosen some of their own, [and] sent them to the Apostolic See, (as it has always been done),” in order to give their reasonings, and listen in turn to the pope. In another letter, with the bishops of Aquileia and Milan in mind, the pope wrote:

It was never licit for anybody, nor is it licit, to gather a particular synod, but whenever doubts arise in certain individuals about an ecumenical council, they ought to come together to the Apostolic See to receive an explanation for what they do not understand... [PL 69: 395–7]

To certain Italian bishops the pope wrote, “I am amazed that you are so forgetful of apostolic authority that you wanted your division from

the Universal Church to be confirmed by my consent as well, and that those who should have overcome popular ignorance with priestly doctrine want to follow the judgment of the people, in contempt of the Apostolic See...” Chiding the bishops for having presumed to remove the pope from the diptychs, Pelagius continued:

How can you not consider yourselves separated from the communion of the whole world, if in the sacred mysteries, you do not, in accordance with custom, recite my name, in whom, notwithstanding my unworthiness, you see that the solidity of the Apostolic See consists at the present time, through the succession of the episcopate? [PL 69: 397–8]

The pope solemnly reaffirmed that he had not added, subtracted or changed *anything* in the first four ecumenical councils, particularly the Tome of Leo, and gave similar assurances to King Childebert of Paris [511–558], declaring that the controversy about the Three Chapters did not touch the faith. [PL 69: 398–402]

Writing to Sapaudus, bishop of Arles and papal vicar, the pope added that the bishops of Africa, Illyricum and all the east had accepted the fifth ecumenical council. Complaining that the bishops of Gaul, who had always “preserved unity with the Apostolic See,” were giving credence to a handful of schismatics, the pope warned: “how perilous it is that anyone be divided from the see of Blessed Peter.” [PL Suppl. 4: 1289]

In a letter published in the last century, Pope Pelagius rebuked a bishop who had shown schismatic leanings. Were you so deceived, the pope asked, “that you did not immediately notice that you were a schismatic, when you departed from the apostolic sees? ...Had you not read that the church was founded by Christ our God upon the prince of the apostles, and founded in such a way that the gates of hell cannot prevail against her? If you had read this, where then did you think the church was, outside of him in whom alone are all the apostolic sees? To whom was the power of binding and loosing granted in the same measure as it was given to him who had accepted the keys?” [Loewenfeld, *S. Epistolae Pontificum Romanorum Ineditae*. Leipzig, 1885]

The pope wrote in a similar vein to the patrician John: “Behold, you have acknowledged that the Church is one, and that [Church], constituted in the root of the Apostolic See, cannot be extinguished.” Pelagius even cited an unnamed treatise, attributed to St. Augustine, to support the concept that the Church is “established in the root of the Apostolic See, through the succession of bishops.” [PL Suppl. 4: 1292-3]

Writing to Agnellus, bishop of Ravenna, the pope insisted that schismatics be punished “by authority of the Apostolic See.” On the other hand, the pope wished to show clemency to clergy returning from schism. In another letter to Agnellus Pelagius called for mercy for a cleric returning to unity, “not forgetting the vigor of the Apostolic See, but subjecting all to charity, which surpasses all things.” [PL Suppl. 4: 1300, 1307]

Gradually the west calmed down, although the schism of Aquileia persisted for well over a century. Pelagius’ successor John III [560-573] was followed by Benedict I [574-578] and Pelagius II [579-590], who in the 580s sent this plea to the bishops of Istria, who were led by their patriarch, Elias of Aquileia, to return to unity:

As far as our weakness is able, we strive, in accordance with the voice of the Gospel, to exhibit to your brotherhood and love, with sincerity of heart, what we have been commanded. For you know that the Lord proclaims in the Gospel: “Simon, Simon, behold Satan has desired to have you, that he might sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail, and do you, when you have been converted, strengthen your brethren.” [Lk. 22, 31-32] Consider that Truth could not have lied, nor will Peter’s faith ever be able to be shaken or changed. For although the devil desired to sift all the disciples, the Lord bears witness that he himself asked for Peter alone, and wished that the others be confirmed by him; and to Peter also was committed the care of ‘feeding the sheep’ [Jn. 21, 15]; and to him also did the Lord deliver ‘the keys of the kingdom of heaven,’ and upon him did he promise to build his church, and He bore

witness that the gates of hell would not prevail against it...
[ACO IV, Vol. 2, 105]

Defending himself against charges of having innovated in the faith, the pope continued:

For we preach, hold, and... defend that faith which, having been handed down by the apostles, and kept inviolably by their successors, [the first three ecumenical councils held], and the Council of Chalcedon of 630 fathers, which met under Emperor Marcian of pious memory, and where our predecessor Pope Leo of holy memory presided through his legates and vicars... we also venerate, hold and defend in every respect the letter of the same Leo, of holy memory, to Flavian, bishop of Constantinople, which is also called the tome... If, however, anybody either thinks, believes or presumes to teach contrary to this faith, let him know... that he is condemned and anathematized. [ACO IV, Vol. 2, 106]

In this letter and a second one to the Istrians, the pope added a warning for the schismatics, writing:

For let us listen to what Blessed Augustine... has defined... about where the Church has been established. For he says that the Church of God is established among those known to preside over the apostolic sees through succession, and whoever separates himself from the authority of these sees is manifestly in schism... And Blessed Cyprian, the outstanding martyr, in the book he entitled *On Unity*, says: "...He who does not hold this unity of the Church, does he think that he holds the faith? He who deserts [and resists] the chair of Peter, upon which the Church was founded, does he trust that he is in the Church?" [ACO IV, Vol. 2: 106, 110]

Finally, in a third letter to the Istrians, the pope went beyond

arguments from authority, giving detailed rebuttals to arguments against the fifth ecumenical council, and showing that schismatics had supported their claims by citing Pope Leo the Great and other authorities out of context. [ACO IV, Vol. 2, 112 sq.]

Although the dissidents, over time, gradually returned to unity, doubts about the fifth ecumenical council persisted among the Istrians. Venerable Bede, seconded by Paul the Deacon, writes that as late as the end of the seventh century, a Synod of Aquileia hesitated to accept the Fifth Council until it was “instructed by the salutary monitions of Blessed Pope Sergius,” St. Sergius I [687–701]. Finally, the schism had ended. [*Chronicon*, Ed. J. Stevenson, *Venerabilis Bedae Opera Historica Minora*, London 1841, 202. Paul the Deacon, *De Gestis Langobardorum* VI, 14. PL 95: 631–2]

Chapter XVI

The Church Besieged

Byzantine rulers had sponsored two major attempts to reunite their empire by securing a formula of union acceptable to Catholics and monophysites: the affair of the Henoticon, and the condemnation of the Three Chapters. Neither campaign had brought back the monophysites. Shortly after 600, theologians in the east began to speculate about another formula of union.

Catholics and monophysites agreed that Christ was true God and true man. The principal monophysite objection against the decrees of Chalcedon was the formula which spoke of “two natures” in Christ. Monophysites rejected this expression, which they considered Nestorian. Claiming St. Cyril of Alexandria as their authority, they preferred to speak of “one incarnate nature” in the Redeemer. Early in the seventh century, Patriarch Sergius of Constantinople, seconded by an Arabian bishop, Theodore of Pharan, proposed a new formula. While retaining on paper the decrees of Chalcedon, they speculated that Christ had “one will” and “one operation,” which others called a *theandric* or “divine-human” operation. The new doctrine was known as “monenergism,” from the Greek for “one operation.” A related doctrine came to be called “monothelitism,” also from the Greek for “one will.”

At Constantinople the new emperor, Heraclius [610-641], found his realms devastated by Persian invasions. The need for religious unity was as urgent as ever. Two major attempts to reconcile Catholics and monophysites had been unsuccessful. Might the third time be a charm? Heraclius certainly hoped so. Before long, the emperor was ready to try out his new formula for religious unity.

In 622, Heraclius led a successful expedition against the Persians, proceeding as far as Theodosiopolis or Garin, in Greater Armenia. An account of Armenian affairs called the *Narratio de Rebus Armeniae* relates that about 631, the Armenians, under their Catholicos Jeser or Esra, held a council at Garin, reunited with the Byzantines and accepted the Council of Chalcedon. [CSCO (*Subs.* 4), 43]

Cyrus and His “Success”

In 633 Cyrus, patriarch of Alexandria, convinced significant numbers of monophysites to unite with the church on the basis of nine points or chapters, including the theory of “one divine-human operation” in Christ. In glowing terms, Cyrus announced the news to Heraclius and Patriarch Sergius of Constantinople. [Mansi 11: 561 sq.]

Not everybody was happy with this “success.” While Cyrus was proclaiming the union, Sophronius, a monk from Palestine, was staying in Egypt. Sophronius, who had a strong background in rhetoric and theology, knew heresy when he saw it. Instinctively he grasped that something was wrong. Was not nature the principle of motion? At Alexandria, the patriarch and the monophysites were proclaiming “one operation” in Christ: did that not imply *one nature in Christ*? No wonder so many monophysites had accepted the union.

Alarmed at the implications of the new doctrine, Sophronius tried to persuade Cyrus to renounce monenergism. Rather than retract, Cyrus sent the monk to discuss the issue with Patriarch Sergius at Constantinople. Sophronius went to Constantinople and conferred with Sergius, who agreed to drop the expression “one operation.” Sophronius, still uneasy, returned to Palestine.

A Rude Awakening: Sophronius Becomes Patriarch of Jerusalem

A few months later, the proponents of heresy received an unpleasant

surprise: Sophronius had become patriarch of Jerusalem. In his letter of enthronement, Sophronius professed fidelity to the five ecumenical councils, praising the writings of St. Cyril of Alexandria and Pope Leo:

[I accept] ...the God-breathed letter of the great and magnificent Leo, luminary of the most holy Roman Church or rather of every church under the sun...and all his letters and doctrines as proceeding from the mouth of Peter the *coryphaeus*, and I kiss them and salute them and embrace them with all my soul... I recognize the latter as definitions [*horismata*] of Peter, and the former [St. Cyril's condemnation of Nestorianism] as definitions of Mark... [PG 87: 3187-8]

In 625, the late Boniface V was succeeded by a new pope, Honorius I [625-638]. Jonas, abbot of Bobbio, praised the new pope as "wise in spirit, vigorous in counsel, outstanding in doctrine, full of gentleness and humility." [PL 87: 1063]

Hard pressed by the objections of Sophronius, Patriarch Sergius decided to write to Pope Honorius. After a courteous introduction, Sergius described how Emperor Heraclius had introduced the doctrine of "one operation" in Christ, and how Cyrus, future patriarch of Alexandria, had asked for passages from the Fathers about whether "one operation" or "two operations" should be maintained in Christ. Sergius had sent Cyrus an alleged letter of Patriarch Menas to Pope Vigilius, with passages from the Fathers about "one operation" and "one will." As patriarch of Alexandria, Sergius' letter continued, Cyrus had succeeded in uniting almost all Egypt with the Church, but the monk Sophronius, objecting to the expression "one operation," had insisted on two operations in Christ. We dropped the expression "one operation," Sergius continued, but this was "very hard," because the monophysites, who till then had refused to hear anything about "our praiseworthy Father Leo," or the Council of Chalcedon, were now commemorating them with a loud voice in the divine mysteries! Besides, Sergius claimed, Sophronius had been unable to produce authorities that taught two operations in Christ. Finally, Sergius had decided that *neither* one nor two operations should be proclaimed in Christ, claiming that the

expression ‘two operations’ would scandalize many, because it did not occur in the Fathers, and it could even lead to the doctrine of two contradictory wills in Christ. [Mansi 11: 529–36]

With this account before him, Pope Honorius tried to sort out what was happening in the east. His first reply to Sergius begins:

We have received the writings of Your Fraternity, by which we have learned that new questions about words were introduced by a certain Sophronius— who was then a monk although now... he has been made bishop of Jerusalem— against our brother Cyrus, bishop of Alexandria, who preaches one operation of our Lord Jesus Christ to those who have converted from heresy... [Mansi 11: 538]

After discussing the union of the two natures in Christ, Honorius continued:

Wherefore we also confess one will of our Lord Jesus Christ, because evidently our nature, not [our] guilt, was assumed by the divinity—that [nature], to be sure, which was created before sin, not the one that was vitiated after the fall. For Christ the Lord, coming in the likeness of the flesh of sin, took away the sin of the world, and of his fulness we have all received: and receiving the form of a servant, he was found in habit as a man, because without sin he was conceived of the Holy Spirit, and also without sin was born of the holy and immaculate virgin Mother of God, experiencing no contamination of [our] vitiated nature... As we have already said, then, the vitiated nature, which would war against the law of His mind, was not assumed by the Savior, but rather He “came to seek and to save what was lost,” that is, the vitiated nature of the human race. For there was not another law in His members, or a diverse will, or one contrary to the Savior, because He was born above the law of the human condition. And although indeed it is

written, “I came not to do my own will, but the will of the Father, who sent me,” and “Father, not my will, but thine be done,” and other similar things— these are not [written] of a diverse will, but of the dispensation of the humanity [which He] assumed. For these things were said for our sake, to whom He gave an example... that each of us might not follow his own will, but rather, in all things, prefer the will of the Lord... [Mansi 11: 539–42]

Returning to the question of one versus two operations, Honorius added:

...neither do canonical authorities appear to have explained that anyone should presume to preach one or two operations of Christ God, which neither the words of the Gospel or the apostles nor a synodal examination about this subject seem to have decided... Now whether, because of the works of the divinity and the humanity, one or two operations should be said or understood to be derived, these things ought not to pertain to us, leaving them to grammarians... [Mansi 11: 542]

Pope Honorius wrote a second letter to Sergius, again contending that *neither* one operation nor two operations should be defined:

As far as ecclesiastical dogma is concerned, what we ought to hold or preach, because of the simplicity of men, and to avoid inextricable controversies, as we said above, we must not define one or two operations in the mediator between God and men, but must confess each of the natures joined in the one Christ by a natural union, working in communion with the other... [Mansi 11: 579]

The Empire Endorses Heresy

Pope Honorius was already in the grave when in 638 Heraclius, in

the *ecthesis* or “exposition” of the faith, asserted that Christ had “one will,” but forbade mention of either one or two operations. When a synod at Constantinople rubber-stamped the *ecthesis*, the Church of Constantinople became monothelite. Pyrrhus, who succeeded Sergius as patriarch, was also monothelite. [Mansi X, 677–80, 992–7]

Meanwhile the see of Peter was vacant, and the emperor was unwilling to allow the consecration of the pope-elect, Severinus, unless Rome accepted the *ecthesis*. Severinus sent legates to Constantinople, to convince the imperial authority not to obstruct his consecration.

A disciple of Sophronius, the monk Maximus who came to be called “the Confessor,” was following these events closely. Writing to an abbot named Thalassius, he described the behavior of the Roman legates:

...when they realized that the ruler, mother and metropolis of the churches would remain widowed [without a bishop] for so long, they obtained their purpose in this way. Since [the Byzantines] thought, unreasonably, that they should extend their own innovation [as far as Rome], the legates, so as to achieve their purpose, followed their reasoning calmly, and as if condescending to their request, said: “We lack authority to act on this matter, because a ministry has been entrusted to us [i.e., to obtain the emperor’s consent for the consecration of Severinus], not an order to give a profession of faith. You may be certain, however, that we will bring back everything you have handed to us, and will show the document [the *ecthesis*] to him who is to be consecrated, and if he judges it to be correct, we will ask him to add his own signature to it. For now, however, do not become for us an obstacle unexpectedly, nor use force so as to drive us away or detain us here. Nor may anyone use force on anybody, especially in a matter of faith. For in faith, he who is weak waxes exceedingly strong, and the gentlest of warriors emerges supreme... *How much more is this the case with the Church and clergy of Rome, which, from of old up to this*

time, as the eldest of all the churches under the sun, has the pre-eminence over all. Having undoubtedly obtained this canonically, both from the councils and from the apostles as well as from their supreme principality, because of the eminence of her pontificate she is not bound to produce any writings or synodical letters, just as in these matters all are subject to her, in accordance with priestly law.” Having thus by these words shown no fear, but having disputed with the clergy of the imperial city with all holy and becoming assurance, as firm ministers of the truly solid and immovable rock, that is, the greatest apostolic Church, they seemed to calm them down, and preserving humility and simplicity, they acted with prudence, making known to them at the beginning the firmness and orthodoxy of their faith. [Mansi X, 677–8]

Before long, Maximus the Confessor was arguing that Pyrrhus, the monothelite patriarch of Constantinople, could not be reinstated without satisfying the Roman see:

If... the see of Rome does not recognize Pyrrhus, not only because he is reprobate but because his opinions are perverse, it is utterly clear that anyone who anathematizes those who condemned Pyrrhus anathematizes *the see of Rome, that is, the Catholic Church*. For I refrain from pointing out that such an individual anathematizes himself, if he continues in communion with the see of Rome and the Catholic Church of God. I beseech you therefore, my blessed master, to command everybody to refrain from calling Pyrrhus “most holy” or “venerable,” for the sacred rule doesn’t allow him to be called any such thing... For it is unlawful to name with any praise him who was formerly condemned and cast out by the apostolic see of the city of Rome... *Let him hasten to render in all things satisfaction to the see of Rome. When that see is satisfied, everybody will in common proclaim him pious and orthodox...* for he speaks in vain if he thinks he is persuading people like me, if he does not satisfy and implore

the blessed pope of the most holy city of Rome, that is, the Apostolic See, *which from God the Incarnate Word Himself as well as all the holy Councils, according to the sacred canons and definitions, has received and possesses supreme power in all things and for all things, over all the holy churches of God throughout the world, as well as power and authority of binding and loosing. For with this church, the Word, who commands the powers of heaven, binds and looses in heaven.* For if he deems that others should be satisfied, but does not implore the blessed Pope of Rome, he acts like one who is accused of murder or some other crime, and hastens to demonstrate his innocence not to him who has the legal right to judge, but only takes the trouble... to show his innocence to other men, private persons who have no power to acquit him of the accusation. [PG 91: 144]

Pyrrhus to Maximus: “What have you to answer for Honorius?”

In 645, when Maximus confronted Pyrrhus in a debate in Africa, Pyrrhus agreed to go to Rome, bow down “before the tombs of the apostles, or rather before the heads of the apostles themselves,” and submit an account of what had happened to “the most holy pope.” According to Maximus, Pyrrhus kept his word, went to Rome, condemned the *ecthesis*, and united himself to “the holy, Catholic and apostolic church.” [PG 91: 352–3]

Defenders of orthodoxy, however, were still saddled with the first letter of Pope Honorius, which was already being exploited by monothelites. Pope John IV [640–642], successor of Severinus, sent the emperor a lengthy letter, sometimes called the “apology for Pope Honorius,” adamantly denying that Honorius was a monothelite:

...all the regions of the West are scandalized [and] disturbed, as our brother Patriarch Pyrrhus... is preaching certain new things, which are outside the rule of faith... as if wresting to his own understanding our predecessor, Pope Honorius of

holy memory— which was utterly foreign to the mind of the Catholic father...Patriarch Sergius, of reverend memory, signified to the earlier mentioned pontiff of the city of Rome, of holy memory, that *certain individuals were asserting two contrary wills in our Redeemer, Jesus Christ...* and therefore, in accordance with the original formation of Adam, our Lord Jesus Christ deigned to have *one natural will of his humanity, not two contrary ones*, as we who are born from the sin of Adam are recognized to have... [Mansi X, 683]

In response to such speculation, John IV continued, Honorius had taught one *human* will in Christ, not “two contrary wills of the mind and flesh, as certain heretics are known to assert madly.” John IV continued his defense of Honorius at some length, and made his own orthodoxy clear by condemning monothelitism in a council. [Mansi X, 682 sq.]

The pope’s defense of Honorius was substantiated by the man who had *drafted* the first letter to Sergius: a Roman abbot named John Symponus. Not only had Symponus composed the letter to Sergius, he also drafted John IV’s apology for Honorius. In the disputation with Pyrrhus, Maximus had adopted this defense of Honorius. The exchange went:

PYRRHUS. “What have you to answer for Honorius, who openly [wrote] to my predecessor, teaching one will in our Lord Jesus Christ?”

MAXIMUS. “Who is the trustworthy exegete of this letter, *he who composed it in the person of Honorius*, who is still living, or those at Constantinople, who speak from their own heart?”

PYRRHUS. “He who composed it.”

MAXIMUS. “The same individual [writing] to the holy Constantine, who became emperor, again in the name of Pope John, who is among the saints, said that: ‘We spoke

of one will in the Lord, *not of his divinity and humanity, but of his humanity alone*. For because Sergius had written that certain individuals were asserting two contradictory wills in Christ, he answered: ‘We said that Christ had one will, not two contradictory wills, of the flesh and of the Spirit, as we do after the fall, which naturally characterized His humanity...’ [PG 91: 328–9]

In the “Tome to Marinus the priest,” Maximus revealed that a personal friend, an abbot named Anastasius, had gone to Rome and discussed the letter of Honorius “with the most distinguished priests of that great Church.” Anastasius conferred also with John Symponus, who continued to deny that the letter had asserted a “numerical unity” of will in Christ; *that*, according to Symponus, had been done by whoever translated the letter into Greek. [PG 91: 244]

Pope Theodore Reacts against the Monothelites

John IV’s successor, Pope Theodore [642–649], had to respond to a new patriarch of Constantinople, Paul, who tried to obtain Rome’s recognition of his election. Pope Theodore had his doubts. In his synodal reply to Paul, the pope wondered openly: why had the *ecthesis* not been removed from public places? If Paul accepted the *ecthesis*, why was there no mention of it in the synodal letter from Constantinople? Why had Paul’s consecrators referred to Pyrrhus as “most holy”? [Ep. 1. Mansi X, 703–4]

Pope Theodore believed that unless Pyrrhus were canonically deposed in a synod, the new patriarch, Paul, would appear to lack a certain legitimacy. Calling for a canonical examination of the case of Pyrrhus, the pope continued:

For in this regard we have commanded our most dear archdeacon Sericus, and our deacon and representative Martin, to whom we entrust our place in deliberations about this matter... In the event, however... that Your Fraternity... sees that supporters of Pyrrhus are causing disturbances...

we have implored [the emperor] by letter to command Pyrrhus to be sent to this city of Rome, so that, with a synodical gathering made by us, he may be judged for his temerity... [Mansi X, 704-5]

Pope Theodore wrote to the Byzantine Church, demanding the retraction of whatever Pyrrhus had done against the traditional faith. The pope also wrote to Paul's consecrators, insisting that Pyrrhus, the old patriarch, be removed canonically. Meanwhile Sergius, metropolitan of Cyprus, and a Cypriot synod praised the pope as "prince and doctor of the orthodox and immaculate faith"; the synod added that it was prepared to die for the traditional faith. [Epp. 1-2. Mansi X, 705-8, 913]

Before long, Paul showed his true colors. He sent to Rome a long, rambling letter, preserved in the acts of the Lateran synod of 649, defending his monothelitism, appealing to various Greek fathers and Pope Honorius. [Mansi X, 1020-25]

Acts of the Lateran Council [649] reveal that Pope Theodore not only deposed Paul, he appointed an old friend of Sophronius, Bishop Stephen of Dora in Palestine, as papal vicar in the east, with the mission of deposing monothelite bishops intruded by the heretic patriarch Sergius of Constantinople. As for Pyrrhus, who had gone to Rome to be reconciled with Pope Theodore, he relapsed into heresy, and was deposed by Rome. [Mansi X, 822, 878-9]

Meanwhile, an imperial emissary named Gregory was trying to get the Romans to subscribe to the new imperial decree on the faith, the *typos* of 648. The *typos*, or "decree," forbade any more talk of "one" or "two" wills or operations in Christ. The *typos* was an attempt to return to the *status quo* before monothelitism. While the *typos* represented a step back from the *ecthesis*, it tended to put orthodoxy and heresy on the same level.

When Maximus encountered Gregory, and learned that he had come to obtain Rome's blessing for the *typos*, the saint replied: "In my opinion, that cannot happen. The Romans will not accept that the luminous

words of the holy fathers be suppressed at the same time as the impure words of the heretics, or that truth be extinguished together with a lie, or that the light be dispelled along with the darkness.” [PG 90: 116]

The Lateran Council of 649

Pope Theodore’s successor Martin [649–655], former papal representative at Constantinople, was well placed to understand the nature of the new heresy. In 649, he called a council at the Lateran. A note at the opening of the Acts, which exist in Latin and Greek, calls it “the holy and apostolic synod, which occurred in the most celebrated Old Rome, according to the sacred command and canonical procurement of the most holy and thrice blessed Pope Martin, who presided over the entire divine hierarchy under the sun, for the establishment and defense of the dogmas of the fathers and synods of the Catholic and apostolic church according to the gospel.” [Mansi X, 863–64]

The notary Theophylact welcomed the bishops, explaining that Pope Martin had summoned them to overthrow a new heresy “by his apostolic and canonical authority.” Then, turning to the pope, Theophylact asked him to address the gathering of bishops, “over which you are pre-eminent through the great and apostolic summit, which is in charge of all priests throughout the world.” [Mansi X, 867–70]

In a long discourse, Pope Martin explained the nature of the new heresy and named the chief culprits: Cyrus of Alexandria, Patriarch Sergius of Constantinople, and Pyrrhus and Paul, successors of Sergius. [Mansi X, 870–82]

Pyrrhus, the pope explained, after deceiving many bishops with blandishments and threats, had offered a signed *libellus*, or profession of faith, “to our apostolic see, condemning... whatever he or his predecessors had written or done against our immaculate faith.” Then, returning like a dog to his vomit, Pyrrhus, who had relapsed, had received his just reward: canonical deposition. As for Paul, he had “endeavored to surpass his predecessors in these matters.” Paul had dared to confirm the monothelite

heresy in written documents sent to the Holy See, and had even harrassed Rome's legates in Constantinople, overthrowing their altar, forbidding them from offering holy mass, and in general persecuting the orthodox faithful. [Mansi X, 878-9]

Many of the faithful, the pope continued, have sent complaints to our apostolic see, imploring and urging us to condemn the new heresy by our apostolic authority. The pope urged the bishops, "whom the Holy Spirit has placed to rule God's church," [Acts 20] to condemn the new heresy with vigilance and zeal. [Mansi X, 879-82]

The conciliar acts contain a letter from Maurus, bishop of Ravenna, "to the most holy and most blessed, apostolic and universal pontiff throughout the whole world, Pope Martin." Unable to come to the council, Maurus professed obedience to Pope Martin's commands and solidarity with the orthodox faith. Maximus, bishop of Aquileia, pointed out that the new heresy was contrary to the faith of Chalcedon, while Deusdedit, a bishop from Sardinia, asked the pope to read the complaints which had reached the Holy See. [Mansi X, 883-90]

Stephen of Dora: "That Chair Which Rules and Presides Over All..."

Pope Martin had an announcement: "*let Stephen, the most reverend bishop of Dora, enter, in accordance with his petition...*" Stephen, trusted lieutenant of the late Sophronius, addressed the council through an interpreter. Stephen explained how Theodore of Pharan had originated the heresy, followed by Cyrus, Sergius, Pyrrhus and Paul, who had dared to renew the teachings of the heretics Apollinarius and Severus by preaching one will and operation in Christ. After explaining the machinations of the heretics, Stephen added:

And for this cause, we sometimes asked for... the wings of a dove... that we might fly away and announce these things *to that Chair which rules and presides over all, that is to yours, the head and highest...* For this it has been accustomed to do from of old and from the beginning with power by its

canonical or spiritual authority, because the truly great Peter, leader of the apostles, clearly was deemed worthy not only to be entrusted with the keys of heaven, alone [and] apart from the rest, worthily to open it to believers, or justly to close it to those who do not believe in the gospel of grace, but because he was also the first one commissioned to feed the sheep of the entire Catholic Church, for He says, “Peter, do you love me? Feed my sheep.” And again, because he had in a peculiar and special manner a faith in the Lord stronger than all and unchangeable, to be converted and to confirm his fellows and spiritual brethren when tossed about, as having been adorned for us by God Incarnate Himself with power and priestly authority... And Sophronius of blessed memory, who was patriarch of the holy city of Christ our God [Jerusalem], and under whom I was bishop, conferring not with flesh and blood but caring only for the things of Christ with respect to Your Holiness, hastened to send my nothingness without delay about this matter alone to this great and Apostolic See... [Mansi X, 893]

Stephen describes a dramatic incident with the late Sophronius:

...And [Sophronius] led my unworthy self and set me in the holy place of Calvary, where He who is by nature God, our Lord Jesus Christ, willingly vouchsafed to be crucified according to the flesh: and there he bound me with indissoluble bonds, saying:

“You shall give an account to Him who for our sake was willingly crucified in this holy place according to the flesh, to God, when He shall come in glory in His awesome advent to judge the living and the dead, if you delay [to defend] faith in Him, which is imperilled, although, as you know, I am prevented from doing so bodily, because of the Saracen invasion, which has befallen us because of our sins. *Traverse swiftly, therefore, from one end of the world to the other,*

until you come to the Apostolic See, where are the foundations of the holy doctrines. Make known clearly to the most holy personages of that throne the questions raised among us. Cease not to pray and beg them until their apostolic and divine wisdom shall have pronounced the victorious judgment and destroyed the new heresy from its foundation.” [Mansi X, 895]

Having overcome all difficulties and persecutions in reaching the Apostolic See, Stephen gave thanks that God had “raised up our lord Martin, the thrice blessed pope presiding in priestly fashion.” [Mansi X, 898]

Noting that he had offered his profession of faith “to the all-holy president, the thrice blessed pope Martin,” Stephen asked him to accept the petitions of all orthodox priests and faithful of the east, and extinguish the darkness of such infamous heresies. [Mansi X, 902]

“Martin, the thrice-blessed pope”

Stephen was followed by a delegation of Greek and Armenian monks led by John, abbot of St. Sabas, who described the council as meeting “*by command of the one divinely presiding over you, priest of priests and father of fathers pre-eminent over all, our lord Martin, the thrice blessed pope.*” John explained how machinations of the heretics had moved the monks to seek out “this highest and apostolic throne.” Nor, he added, were the monks speaking in their own name only, but in the name of “every province and city dwelling in faith.” [Mansi X, 903-5]

John continued, “this is why we urge and implore you all, most holy fathers, and the apostolic and highest throne” to anathematize the heretics. “*The hearts of all look to you, after God, knowing that you have been established by Christ our God as leader and head of the churches.*” [Mansi X, 905-8]

The notary Theophylact reminded the pope that at various times, many had requested “your principal and apostolic see” to submit the new

Keys Over the Christian World

heresy to a canonical anathema. Pope Martin asked for the letter from Metropolitan Sergius of Cyprus to Pope Theodore in 643. Exuperius the notary read the translation out loud:

To my most holy and most blessed and divinely strengthened master, father of fathers, archbishop and ecumenical patriarch... Sergius sends greetings in the Lord. O sacred summit, Christ our God has established your apostolic see as a fixed and immovable foundation, and a most luminous pillar of the faith. For you are, as the divine word rightly says, Peter, and upon your foundation have the pillars of the Church been fixed. [He] has placed in your hands the keys of heaven; and has decreed that you shall bind and loose on earth and in heaven, with authority. You are the destroyer of profane heresies as prince and doctor of the orthodox and immaculate faith. [Mansi X, 911-14]

The metropolitan assured Pope Theodore that he, Sergius, had followed the teaching of “the holy and most blessed Pope Leo, since the cradle.” Sergius warned that monothelite heretics were working to subvert the faith of the divinely inspired fathers. Sergius explained that he had been compelled to anathematize the heretics, and as if to stir the pope into action, two more times invoked the memory of the “most holy pope Leo.” [Mansi X, 913-15]

Letters From the African Councils

Theophylact the notary read another intervention, which three African councils had sent in 643.

To the most blessed lord raised to the apostolic summit, the holy father of fathers, pope Theodore, supreme pontiff of all bishops— Columbus, primate of the council of Numidia, Stephen, primate of the council of Byzacena, and Reparatus, primate of the council of Mauritania, and all bishops of the aforementioned three councils of the province of Africa. Nobody may doubt that there

is in the Apostolic See a great unfailing fountain, pouring forth waters for all Christians, from which copious streams flow, irrigating the whole Christian world most abundantly, to which, in honor of the most blessed Peter, the decrees of the Fathers decreed particular reverence in investigating divine things, which ought to be examined carefully by all means, *especially and justly examined by the apostolic head of bishops*, whose care from of old has been both to condemn evils and approve what is worthy of praise. For by ancient rules it has been laid down that whatever is done, [even] in remote or distant provinces, should not be handled or accepted before it is brought to the knowledge of your holy see, so that by its authority whatever sentence pronounced may be confirmed, and that from thence the other churches may receive the original preaching as from its natal wellspring, and that the mysteries of saving faith may remain in uncorrupted purity throughout the different regions of the world. [Mansi X, 919]

The African bishops, “paying most humble obeisance to your apostolic summit,” had asked the pope to take whatever measures seemed necessary to combat the new heresy. [Mansi X, 919-22]

“Our Apostolic and Supreme See”

Pope Martin observed that requests were coming in from all over the Catholic world, “imploping our apostolic and supreme see to arise in condemnation of the new doctrine.” [Mansi X, 923]

The notaries had another petition from Victor, primate of Carthage, who had sent it to Pope Theodore about 646. Victor had warned the pope about the new heresy, citing “the definition of Leo, your most blessed predecessor of apostolic memory,” and a passage from Pope Felix II [483-492]: “to leave the perverse undisturbed is nothing else than to favor them...” Victor had told the pope:

It is your role, most holy brother, to oppose what is contrary

to the Catholic faith by a canonical judgment in the customary way, and not to allow any novelty to be uttered, which the authority of the venerable fathers absolutely never approved. [Mansi X, 947-50]

Pleased with this intervention by Victor, “the venerable bishop of Carthage,” Pope Martin praised his humility,

...which did not presume he had the competence to declare Paul deposed, but called him a fellow bishop until he found out about the judgment of our apostolic authority, that is, of Peter, prince of the Apostles, who alone before the rest was entrusted with, and merited to receive from the king of kings, Christ our God, the keys of the kingdom of heaven, so as to open it to those who rightly believe in the same Lord, and to close it to faithless heretics. This is also what the venerable bishop of Carthage also asked us to do, by his own writings... [Mansi X, 950]

A bishop named Deusdedit concurred, observing to Pope Martin that Patriarch Paul of Constantinople had been “admonished in writing and otherwise by your predecessors, and had remained uncorrected and disobedient... for he was canonically admonished, both by your apostolic commands and through the most reverend delegates of your supreme see.” [Mansi X, 1027]

“A Man Burning With Zeal”

Maximus, primate of Aquileia, remarked that God “has raised up the holy spirit of a man burning with zeal for the Lord, whose venerable name [is] Martin, who has convoked us in holy fashion, and presides over us by apostolic authority.” [Mansi X, 1055]

The council condemned the new heresy in twenty canons, and Pope Martin wrote to all the faithful, calling upon them to anathematize monothelism, the *ecthesis* and the *typos*. The pope wrote to Emperor

Constans II [641–668], informing him that the Apostolic See, at the request of the orthodox faithful, had condemned monothelitism. Forwarding a Greek translation of the acts of the Lateran Council, the pope asked the emperor to join in condemning the heresy. Pope Martin also wrote to Amandus, bishop of Tugern, asking him to assist in bringing about a similar council in the kingdom of Austrasia. Martin also wanted to obtain the participation of Frankish bishops in the delegation to Constantinople, which was to hand the emperor the decisions of the Lateran Council and Frankish synods. Pope Martin also wanted the bishops of Neustria to participate, and chose the bishops of Rouen and Noyon for the mission, but those two bishops were prevented from carrying out their mission. The pope communicated his decisions to the Church of Carthage, the primatial see of Latin Africa. [Mansi X, 790 sq. Cf. Hefele 5: 115–16]

Dramatic Intervention In the East

Shortly afterwards, Pope Martin appointed John, bishop of Philadelphia, as a special vicar in the east with wide authority. The pope exhorted John:

...correct the things which are wanting, and appoint bishops, priests and deacons in every city of those which are subject to the see of both Jerusalem and of Antioch, with us charging you to do this in every way, by virtue of the apostolic authority which was given to us by the Lord in the person of the most holy Peter, prince of the apostles, on account of the necessities of our time, and the pressure of the nations. [Mansi X, 806 sq.]

John also had authority to depose heretical bishops and reconcile clergy who had returned to the orthodox faith. The pope's letters reveal that a similar mission had already been given to Bishop Stephen of Dora, but that the papal instructions to ordain orthodox clergy had been intercepted. [Mansi X, 822]

Martin wrote directly to the faithful of the patriarchates of Jerusalem

and Antioch, informing them of the decrees of the Lateran Council, condemning Macedonius and Peter, heretical patriarchs of those eastern sees, and requiring obedience to John of Philadelphia, who had been appointed “by the authority given us in the Lord through Saint Peter, prince of the apostles.” [Mansi X, 827-31]

The pope wrote to two other bishops, Theodore of Ebus and Anthony of Bacatha. These bishops, who came from Arabia but fell within the province of third Palestine, in the patriarchate of Jerusalem, had converted from heresy and thus obtained papal confirmation. Martin urged them to support the mission of his vicar, John. Finally, Pope Martin wrote to the bishop of Thessalonica, who had hoodwinked the papal legates, threatening him with deposition unless he accepted the decrees of the Lateran Council. In another letter, the pope informed the faithful of Thessalonica of his decisions. [Mansi X, 815 sq. Cf. Hefele 5: 117]

The Witness of Maximus the Confessor

The monk Maximus applauded the Lateran Council, putting it on the same level as the five ecumenical councils. In a letter composed at Rome, he wrote:

These confines of the inhabited world, and those throughout the world who confess the Lord in a pious and orthodox manner, look straight to the most holy Church of Rome, towards her confession and faith, as to a sun of perennial light, receiving from her the bright splendor of the holy teachings of the fathers, as they were explained piously and in all purity *by the six holy councils* [the five ecumenical councils, plus the Lateran Council], which were inspired and dictated by God in proclaiming very clearly the Symbol of Faith. For ever since the Word of God condescended to us and became man, *all the Churches of Christians everywhere have held, and hold the great Church there as their sole basis and foundation, because, according to the very promises of the Lord, the gates of hell have never prevailed over her, but rather she has the*

keys of the orthodox faith and confession; she opens the genuine and only piety to those who approach her piously, but closes every heretical mouth that speaks injustice... [PG 91: 137-40]

The Keys of Martyrdom: Final Days of Martin and Maximus

Maximus and Pope Martin were about to pay the price for their opposition to the emperor. A first-hand account, sent “to all orthodox fathers who are in the west, that is, Rome and Africa,” describes “the persecution directed against our most holy father blessed in God, the faithful prince of priests and universal apostolic pope, and at the same time against the Catholic Church.” The writer relates that Pope Martin was taken from his apostolic throne, where God had placed him, like the apostle, as interpreter of his thought and orthodox preacher of the truth, led from island to island and eventually to Naxos and Constantinople, given a show trial, stripped of his vestments, imprisoned and threatened with death. On Holy Thursday 655, Pope Martin was sent to the Crimea, where he died of his sufferings on September 16. [Mansi X, 853-61]

With obvious emotion, the writer described the outrages inflicted on Pope Martin, calling him “the supreme and apostolic and principal shepherd of all Christians,” who had confirmed the orthodox confession of the holy fathers and councils, and anathematized canonically, in council, the authors of the new heresy. [Mansi X, 857]

Years later, the monks Theodore and Theodosius of Gangres left a memorial, or *Hypomnesticon*, to commemorate the martyrs of the monothelite period, including “Martin, supreme and apostolic pope and martyr.” [PG 90: 193-4]

Eulogizing “the supreme and truly universal pope and great martyr for the truth,” the brothers spoke of his zeal to lay down his life for the truth, “as imitator and successor of Peter, prince of the apostles.” [PG 90: 197]

The brothers visited the scene of the pope’s sufferings. Reverently

gathering what remained of his vestments, they noted that some were worn only by “the holy pope of Rome,” recalling with emotion how Martin had imitated Christ, and followed in all things “Peter, *coryphaeus* of the apostles, whose successor he also was.” [PG 90: 202]

A Greek *Life* of St. Martin commemorated him as a “pillar of orthodox truth,” and included his predecessor, Pope Theodore, among the saints as well. [AB 51: 253]

Centuries later, even a monophysite patriarch, Michael the Syrian [1166-1199], praised the martyred pope, writing that “everybody bore witness to his works of piety.” [*Chronicle* Bk XI, 7, ed. Chabot 2: 427]

A Saint on Trial

Maximus was the next to suffer. Arrested and compelled to stand trial for treason, the saint was asked why he did not communicate with the Church of Constantinople. He answered:

Because they have overthrown the four councils, through the nine chapters which were established at Alexandria, and by the *ecthesis*...and by the *typos*...and what they taught by the chapters, they condemned by the *ecthesis* and what they taught by the *ecthesis* they abrogated by the *typos*, deposing themselves in each instance. They are condemned by their own action, and... by the Romans... and by the [Lateran] Council. What manner of mystagogy can they celebrate, and what kind of Spirit can assist the acts performed by such men? [PG 90: 120]

An official asked Maximus, “Why do you love the Romans and hate the Greeks?” The saint answered, “We are commanded not to hate anybody. I love the Romans as having the same faith, and the Greeks as having the same language.” [PG 90: 128]

At the urging of Maximus, his disciple Anastasius wrote to the monks

of Sardinia whose bishop, Deusdedit, had participated in the Lateran Council. Anastasius urged the monks to alert “the men of Old Rome, pious and firm as a rock, they who are clearly always our defenders and very fervent champions of the faith.” [PG 90: 135–6]

Encouraged by Rome’s firmness, Maximus refused to compromise, insisting that the Byzantines accept the decrees of the Lateran Council. When they replied that “the council of Rome has no authority, because it took place without the emperor’s order,” Maximus reminded his jailers of all the heretical councils that *had* been approved by emperors, and asked: “What rule establishes that only councils gathered at the emperor’s order must be approved? The pious rule of the Church recognizes as pious and holy the councils approved for the orthodoxy of their teaching.” [PG 90: 145–8]

Finally, the imperial emissaries declared that they were willing to accept the doctrine of the Two Wills, but not the Lateran Council of 649, because it had anathematized two Byzantine patriarchs— Sergius and Pyrrhus. The saint replied:

Master, being a simple monk I dare not accept your agreement on a matter of such importance... but if God has moved you to receive the words of the holy fathers, send on this subject, as the rule requires, a written document to the bishop of Rome— the emperor, the patriarch, and the synod under him. Even if that happens, I am not returning to communion with you as long as, at the moment of the holy anaphoras, anathematized individuals are mentioned, because I fear the condemnation of the anathema... Let the emperor and the patriarch, then, agree to imitate God’s condescendence: let the one send a supplicatory rescript, and the other, a synodal supplication to the pope of Rome, and he, if the usage of the Church prevails, granting you this favor because of your right confession of faith, will be reconciled with you. [PG 90: 153–6]

An Appeal From Crete

At Rome, Pope Martin's successor Eugene I [654–657] was followed by Pope Vitalian [657–672], who had to answer an appeal from Crete. John, bishop of Lappa, complained that he had been unjustly condemned by his metropolitan, Paul of Crete. John had taken his case to Rome, personally offering his petition to Pope Vitalian in the Basilica of Peter, prince of the apostles. Evoking the image of “the awesome coming of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ,” John had asked Vitalian to examine the case, “according to the most sacred canons, and the institutions of the holy fathers.” [Mansi 11: 16]

Pope Vitalian called a synod and concluded that John's case “had not been conducted and concluded according to the fear of God, the institutions of the fathers and the sacred canons,” and that John had been unjustly punished. Vitalian wrote to Archbishop Paul of Crete, informing him “by the authority of this our command, that everything done by you and your synod contrary to the institutions of the canons and against the decrees of the laws is null and void.” Declaring that John was innocent and had been absolved, Vitalian called for his reinstatement:

...take care to carry out what we enjoin on you and your synod according to God and on account of the Lord, lest we be compelled to act not in mercy but according to the force of the most sacred canons. For it is written: *The Lord says: Peter, I have prayed for thee that thy faith may not fail: and do thou, when thou hast been converted, strengthen thy brethren.* And again: *Whatsoever thou shalt bind, Peter, on earth, shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.* [Mansi 11: 16–17]

The pope also wrote similar letters in defense of John to the bishop of Syracuse and the imperial chamberlain. [Mansi 11: 17–19]

Subversion at Ravenna

Pope Vitalian also had a serious confrontation with Maurus,

archbishop of Ravenna. A chronicle of the bishops of Ravenna, called *Liber Pontificalis Ecclesiae Ravennatis*, records that Maurus was having “many fights” and “altercations” with the Roman Pontiff. Maurus had made several trips to Constantinople, the *Liber* adds, so as to remove his church from the “yoke of the Romans.” Eventually Maurus reached an agreement by which the bishops of Ravenna would no longer be subject to Rome or go to Rome for consecration, but instead be consecrated locally and receive the omophorion, or metropolitan insignia, from Constantinople. [PL 106: 669–70]

The pope sent a delegation to Ravenna, which summoned Maurus to Rome. When he refused to appear, the *Liber* continues, the pope was indignant, threatening Maurus with anathema. An angry Maurus wrote to Rome, and had the effrontery to threaten to anathematize the pope as well. The pope was about to send legates to Constantinople, to demand that the emperor force Maurus to appear before a Roman council, the *Liber* adds, but both Maurus and the pope died. According to the *Liber*, the schism lasted until the era of Pope Agatho [678–681], when Theodore, a new bishop of Ravenna, “subjugated himself and his church to the Roman Pontiff.” [PL 106: 671 sq., 689]

Last Days of Maximus the Confessor

Meanwhile, Maximus not only had to endure imprisonment, but spiritual pressure from Peter, the monothelite patriarch. Claiming that the five patriarchal sees were in union, he urged Maximus to rejoin the official church at Constantinople. The Catholic Church, the saint retorted, is the “right and salvific confession of faith in the God of the universe, who has shown this by proclaiming Peter blessed for having confessed him rightly.” [PG 90: 132]

The emperor and patriarch had continued to ratchet up the pressure on Maximus, threatening to have him anathematized “by command of the pope of Rome,” as Maximus wrote to his disciple Anastasius. [PG 90: 132]

Maximus had urged Anastasius to alert the pope, “and our holy

Keys Over the Christian World

fathers who are over there,” i.e., at Rome. Anastasius gave the Romans this message:

Maximus commanded me to transcribe these things and make them known to you, most holy ones, so that, having found out what has happened, you may all address to the Lord a common prayer for the mother of us all, the Catholic Church, to confirm everybody, ourselves included... for there is great fear throughout the world in that everybody is undergoing this persecution together, *unless He who always comes to our aid gives the help of his grace, as He is accustomed, leaving the seed of piety at least at Old Rome, and confirming for us the promise, which does not lie, made to the prince of the apostles.* [PG 90: 133–4]

Like Pope Martin before him, Maximus was ready to lay down his life for the true faith. The saint and his disciple, the monk Anastasius, had their tongues cut and right hands amputated, and together with the Roman deacon Anastasius, were sent into exile, where all three died of their sufferings. [*S. Maximi Vita ac Certamen; Letter of the priest Anastasius to Theodosius of Gangres.* PG 90: 104–8, 171–8]

The Sixth Ecumenical Council

Pope Vitalian was succeeded by Popes Adeodatus [672–676], Donus [676–678], and Agatho [678–681], a Sicilian. As pope, Agatho had to respond to the proposal of Emperor Constantine Pogonatus, who had asked the “ecumenical pope,” Donus, to send envoys to Constantinople to discuss reunion of the churches. [Mansi 11: 195–204]

Before answering the letter, Agatho wanted the west to proclaim its faith in the two wills. Councils were held in various places, especially at Rome, where a synod of 125 bishops reaffirmed the traditional faith. The pope also sent legates to Constantinople, who carried two dogmatic letters. The first letter, which reaffirmed the Church’s faith in the two wills and operations in Jesus Christ, was in the name of Agatho alone. The second

was in the name of Agatho and the Roman council.

The emperor also heard from Mansuetus, bishop of Milan, who forwarded an anti-monothelite profession of faith, giving special mention to Pope Leo the Great and to St. Cyril, who, “endowed with the authority of the Apostolic See,” had led the Council of Ephesus. [Mansi 11: 203–8]

In the second session, the emperor called for the acts of the Council of Chalcedon to be read. As the notary read the passage from the Tome of Leo, “Each form does what is proper to itself, with the communion of the other...” the legates sprang to their feet, exclaiming: “Behold, most kind lord, the present most holy father manifestly preaches two natural operations, without confusion and without division, in our Lord Jesus Christ, whose words the fourth holy synod [Chalcedon] recorded as a bulwark of the orthodox faith, and the condemnation of all heresy, and as agreeing with the profession of Blessed Peter, prince of the apostles.” [Mansi 11: 219–22]

In the next session, the notary began reading the spurious letters of Patriarch Menas and Pope Vigilius, which were supposed to support “one operation.” Again the legates were prepared, denouncing the letters as fakes, a charge which was verified after a little investigation. [Mansi 11: 226–7]

The Fourth Session: “Peter has Spoken through Agatho”

In the fourth session, the council heard the letter of Pope Agatho, who wrote that he had been in great anxiety and anguish, but had been consoled by the emperor’s proposal. The pope continued with a profession of faith in the mystery of the Holy Trinity and the two natures, two natural wills and two natural operations in our Lord Jesus Christ, which are not contrary or adverse to each other, or in two distinct persons, and added:

This is the apostolic and evangelical tradition which your most felicitous empire’s spiritual mother, the apostolic church of Christ, holds. This is the true and immaculate profession of the Christian religion, which human ingenuity

did not invent, but which the princes of the apostles taught... which Blessed Peter the apostle... taught, not that it might be hidden under a bushel, but that it be preached more loudly than a trumpet throughout the world: because his true confession was revealed by the Heavenly Father, for which Peter was pronounced blessed by the Lord of all. With a threefold recommendation, [Peter] also received from the very Redeemer of all, the Church's spiritual sheep, to feed them: by whose protection, this apostolic Church of his has never turned aside to any part of error, whose authority, as that of the prince of all the apostles, the entire Catholic Church of Christ, and the ecumenical councils, ever faithfully embracing, followed in all things... this is the rule of the true faith, which both in prosperity and adversity your most serene empire's spiritual mother, the apostolic church of Christ, has keenly held and defended: which, by the grace of Almighty God, shall be shown never to have erred from the path of apostolic tradition, nor has she succumbed to being corrupted by heretical innovations, but as she has received from the beginning of the Christian faith from her authors, the princes of Christ's apostles, she remains unblemished to the very end, in accordance with the divine promise of the very Lord [and] Savior, which in the sacred Gospels he uttered to the prince of his disciples, saying: "Peter, Peter, behold Satan has sought to sift you, as one who sifts wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith may not fail, and do you, when you have been converted, strengthen your brethren." Let your Serene Clemency consider, therefore, that the Lord and Savior of all, from whom the faith comes, who promised that the faith of Peter would not fail, admonished him to strengthen his brethren: which, as everybody knows, the apostolic pontiffs, predecessors of my lowliness, ever did with confidence... For woe to me, if I neglect to preach what they preached with sincerity. Woe to me, if I cover over in silence what I have been commanded to instill into and to teach the Christian people... [Mansi 11: 239-42]

The pope refuted monothelitism with lengthy citations from scripture and the eastern and western fathers. Finally, after recalling the perfidy of several patriarchs of Constantinople, who had dared to send heretical letters to Rome, he asked the emperor to rescue the orthodox faith, “which is founded on the firm rock of this church of Blessed Peter, prince of the apostles, which, by his gift and protection remains unblemished from all error.” Of this Blessed Peter, Agatho continued, we, although unworthy, exercise the office and preach the formula of his tradition. “May grace from on high,” Agatho concluded, “guard the empire, and lay low before it the necks of all the nations.” [Mansi 11: 243-86]

The synodal letter evokes the memory of Peter and Paul, “princes of the apostles, and their disciples and apostolic successors,” Pope Martin, “of apostolic memory,” and “the sacred tome of the apostolic man, Pope Leo, which the blessed apostle Peter published in his words.” [Mansi 11: 286-98]

“Anathema to the New Dioscorus...”

In the fifth session Macarius, patriarch of Antioch, offered two codices which, he claimed, taught “one will” in Christ the Lord. Again the legates opposed him, pointing out that the passages cited by Macarius either had to do with one will in the Trinity, or had been truncated and taken out of context. The legates offered their own passages from the fathers which clearly taught two natural wills and operations. [Mansi 11: 319, 326-7]

In the eighth session, Emperor Constantine Pogonatus asked the bishops of Constantinople and Antioch for their opinion about the letters sent “by Agatho, the most holy Pope of Rome, and by his synod.” One after another, the metropolitans indicated that they agreed with the letters. Domitius, bishop of Prusiados, said, “I receive and embrace the letters sent by our father Agatho, the most holy archbishop of the apostolic and leading throne [*koruphaïou thronou*] of Old Rome... as having been dictated by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of the holy and most blessed *coryphaeus* of the apostles, Peter...” [Mansi 11: 335 sq.]

Patriarch George of Constantinople, with the emperor's consent, called for the name of "Vitalian, Pope of Rome of holy memory" to be restored to the diptychs. The council responded with acclamations in favor of the emperor, senate and Agatho, orthodox Pope of Rome. [Mansi 11: 346]

That left the issue of Macarius. Questioned by the council about his faith, Macarius claimed to agree with the teachings of the first five ecumenical councils *and Honorius, Sergius, Paul and Peter*. Macarius read a profession of faith which was interrupted with exclamations such as, "He has manifestly demonstrated himself to be a heretic, anathema to the new Dioscorus, throw out the new Dioscorus..." [Mansi 11: 345-66]

In the eleventh session, the council listened to the synodical letter of Sophronius, who had blown the whistle on the new heresies decades earlier. Sophronius had acclaimed the chapters of Cyril of Alexandria as definitions of Mark and the Tome of Pope Leo as definitions of Peter the *coryphaeus*. Sophronius had also condemned the principal heretics up to his day, including Timothy the Cat, Peter Mongus and Acacius, who had been responsible for the *Henoticon* of Zeno. [Mansi 11: 497, 502]

"Honorius, who was Pope of Old Rome..."

In the thirteenth session, the council took up the issue of Honorius, Sergius and Cyrus. Condemning Sergius, Cyrus, Pyrrhus, Peter and Paul, the council also anathematized "Honorius, who was pope of old Rome, because we found that through the letters sent from him to Sergius, he followed his mind in all things, and confirmed his impious teachings." [Mansi 11: 553-6]

Later, the bishops even exclaimed, "Anathema to the heretic Theodore of Pharan, anathema to Sergius the heretic, anathema to Paul the heretic, anathema to Honorius the heretic..." [Mansi 11: 622]

On the other hand, the council was full of praise for Agatho. Naming the principal fathers of monothelitism, it declared that "the aforesaid most

holy pope has cast them out along with their own writings.” When the letters of Pyrrhus, Paul, Peter and Theodore of Pharan were reread, the bishops declared, “well and justly did Agatho, the most holy Pope of Old Rome, cast them out by the letter he sent to our most pious and triumphant emperor, and we also, in agreement with him, have decreed that they be expelled from the sacred diptychs and punished with anathema, as thinking contrary to the true faith...” [Mansi 11: 557, 563-74]

In the eighteenth session, the council pronounced its definition of faith. Reaffirming the teaching of the ecumenical councils, including the Creeds of Nicea and Constantinople, the bishops proclaimed the two wills and operations in Christ, anathematizing Theodore of Pharan, Sergius, Pyrrhus, Paul, Peter, “and Honorius, who was Pope of Old Rome.” [Mansi 11: 631 sq.]

The Logos Prosphonetikos

After the anathemas and acclamations, the council turned to Constantine Pogonatus in a formal address called the *logos prosphonetikos*. Commending Pogonatus for his zeal for the orthodox faith, the bishops declared that they had come in obedience to his sacred letters, and to “the arch-high-priestly bishop of Old Rome and the apostolic acropolis,” Agatho. [Mansi 11: 657-60]

The council also offered this synopsis of the first five ecumenical councils:

—Arius arose as a divider of the Trinity. Constantine and “the praiseworthy Silvester” gathered together the great and distinguished Council of Nicea.

—Macedonius denied the divinity of the [Holy] Spirit: but Emperor Theodosius and Damasus, the “adamant of the faith,” resisted. Gregory [of Nazianzen] and Nectarius convened a synod “in this royal city,” Constantinople, and suppressed the execrable blasphemies against the Holy Spirit.

Keys Over the Christian World

—Nestorius divided Christ, but was cast out at Ephesus by Celestine and Cyril.

—Eutyches had raged against the humanity of Christ, but Leo had roared out of Rome like a lion, and Emperor Marcian, together with Anatolius of Constantinople and the entire Council of Chalcedon had embraced the “divinely written tablet,” the Tome of Leo.

—After these things, Vigilius agreed with Justinian, and the fifth council was established... [Mansi 11: 661-2]

The council added that it was of one mind in the Holy Spirit, and agreed with the dogmatic letters of “our most holy father and chiefest pope, Agatho,” and gave a detailed exposition of its faith, including the two natural wills and operations in Christ. Condemning errors opposed to this faith, the council announced that it had justly anathematized “Theodore of Pharan, and the former patriarchs of Constantinople: Sergius and Paul, Pyrrhus and Peter, Cyrus of Alexandria, and along with them Honorius, who was bishop of Rome, as one who followed them in these matters, Macarius, who was bishop of Antioch, and Stephen, his disciple...” [Mansi 11: 664-5]

The council added, “and lest anyone find fault with the divine zeal of the most holy pope, or the present angelic assembly, we have followed his teaching, and he, before us and together with us, followed the traditions of the apostles and the fathers.” The bishops continued:

The chiefest first-apostle fought with us, for we had as our helper his imitator and the successor of his see, who through his letters shed light on the mystery of theology. The ancient city of Rome offered you that divinely written confession, and the letter offered the light of dogmas from the regions of the west, and the ink shone, and through Agatho Peter spoke... [Mansi 11: 665]

The subscriptions begin with those of the legates of Rome, who are described as “holding the place of the most blessed Agatho, universal

pope of the city of Rome.” [Mansi 11: 667 sq.]

The Tome “Divinely Written by the Supreme Summit of the Apostles”

The bishops also wrote to Pope Agatho:

The greatest diseases require the greatest remedies, as you know, most blessed ones: and therefore has Christ our true God... given us a wise physician, Your Holiness honored by God, powerfully repelling the disease of heresy with the remedies of orthodoxy, and granting the vigor of health to the members of the Church. To you, therefore, as bishop of the first see of the universal Church, we readily leave [the decision about] what is to be done, standing as you are upon the firm rock of faith, having read the letter of the true confession sent by Your Paternal Beatitude to the most pious emperor, which we recognize as having been divinely written by the supreme summit of the apostles, through which we have driven off the newly arisen heretical sect of manifold error... [Mansi 11: 684]

The council listed prelates whom it “justly subjected to the anathema of heretics,” including Theodore of Pharan, Patriarch Sergius of Constantinople, Pope Honorius, and Patriarchs Cyrus, Paul, Pyrrhus and Peter. Calling Agatho the “sacred head,” the council asked him to confirm its acts by his “honorable rescripts.” [Mansi 11: 685–8]

Pope Agatho, who died shortly after the council, was venerated as a saint in east and west. His epitaph calls him the “supreme bishop,” and “apex of the pontificate, supported by the weight of virtues.” [A.S. 1: 626]

The Byzantine Church commemorated him on February 21. The Menologion of Basil the Macedonian depicts Agatho as a wonder-worker who, because virtue cannot lie hidden, became Pope of Rome. [PG 117: 324]

At Constantinople, Emperor Constantine Pogonatus wrote to St. Agatho's successor, Leo II. Addressing Leo as "ecumenical pope," Pogonatus remarked that when Agatho's letter had been brought, "we perceived as it were the ruler of the apostolic choir, Peter who holds the first chair, divinely illustrating to our mind's eyes the entire mystery of the Incarnation, and through those letters pronouncing these words to Christ: 'Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God,' for his sacred letter explained to us the whole Christ." Only Macarius, bishop of Antioch, dissented, Pogonatus continued, "because he utterly refused to assent to the most sacred letters of Agatho, as if raving against the very *coryphaeus*, Peter." Because Macarius and his followers had asked to be sent to Rome, the emperor added, "we have sent them to you, leaving their entire case to your paternal judgment." Calling Leo "your most sacred summit," Pogonatus asked him to send legates to the imperial city. [Hefele 5: 179. Mansi 11: 713-8]

The emperor also wrote "to all the synods pertaining to the synod of the apostolic throne," or the western provinces. Congratulating the bishops for having been present with "the ecumenical arch-shepherd," Pogonatus announced that the council had received Agatho's letter as the voice of Peter and a veritable pillar of the truth. The new heresy having been defeated, Constantine bade the westerners to rejoice at the outcome of the council. [Mansi 11: 720-24]

Leo II Replies to Constantine Pogonatus

In his reply, Pope Leo II praised the emperor's labors on behalf of orthodoxy, noting that the "holy and universal and great sixth council" agreed with "the universal council seated with this holy Apostolic See, whose ministry we exercise." The sixth council had confessed that our Lord Jesus Christ is true God and true man, and therefore has two natural wills and two natural operations, Leo added, and "this norm of the right and apostolic tradition my predecessor Agatho, pope of apostolic memory, preached together with his synod." [Mansi 11: 726-30]

Pleased that the holy council had embraced this norm of orthodox tradition "in every respect together with us, as if recognizing in it the authentic

doctrine of Blessed Peter, prince of the apostles,” Leo declared that the holy and universal sixth council had followed in all respects the apostolic doctrine, the doctrine of the approved fathers. The council, he added, had proclaimed a definition of orthodox faith “which the Apostolic See of Blessed Peter the apostle— whose ministry we exercise, however lowly— has received with veneration.” The pope continued:

Therefore we also, and through our office this venerable Apostolic See, agree in concord and unanimity with what has been defined by it, and confirm them by the authority of Blessed Peter the apostle as having obtained their firmness from the Lord himself, as it were upon the solid rock which is Christ. [Mansi 11: 730]

We receive and firmly proclaim the sixth ecumenical council, Leo continued, just as the first five, “which Christ’s entire Church approves and follows.” Anathematizing a long list of ancient heresiarchs, Pope Leo also condemned “the inventors of the new error,” namely:

Theodore, bishop of Pharan, Cyrus of Alexandria, Sergius, Pyrrhus, Paul, Peter... and also Honorius, who did not enlighten this apostolic church with the doctrine of apostolic tradition, but allowed the unblemished faith to be stained by a profane betrayal... [Mansi 11: 731-2]

The Latin and Greek texts of this letter vary here. According to the Greek, Honorius “allowed” the unblemished faith to be stained. The passage is even more pointed in the Latin, according to which Honorius *profana proditiōne immaculatam fidem subvertere conatus est*, or “strove to subvert the unblemished faith by a profane betrayal.” [Mansi 11: 731-2]

Leo II wrote to the bishops of Spain, communicating his confirmation of the council and asking them to add their subscriptions. The pope praised their zeal for the Christian faith and the apostolic tradition, “for which this holy mother of all the churches, the Apostolic See, has ever labored.” Leo added that the emperor, “a son of the blessed apostle Peter,”

had arranged the holy and universal sixth council, to which legates had been sent “with the dogmatic Tome of our predecessor of apostolic memory, lord Agatho, pope and pontiff,” and the council had confirmed the orthodox doctrine of two natural wills and operations in our Lord Jesus Christ. [Mansi 11: 1050–51]

As for opponents of the purity of apostolic tradition, the pope continued, “they have been punished with eternal condemnation, that is, Theodore of Pharan, Cyrus of Alexandria, Sergius, Pyrrhus, Paul and Peter, [former bishops] of Constantinople, along with Honorius, who did not, as befitted his apostolic authority, extinguish the rising flame of heretical doctrine but instead favored it by his negligence.” [Mansi 11: 1052]

Because the acts of the council had not yet been translated into Latin, the pope sent a partial collection— the Definition, the *logos proshonetikos* or bishops’ address to Constantine Pogonatus, and the emperor’s edict in favor of the council— promising to send the complete acts once the translation was completed. The pope asked the bishops to promulgate the Definition of the Council throughout their provinces and sign it, thus entering their names in the Book of Life; the pope intended to place the signatures at the very confession of Blessed Peter, prince of the apostles, “from whom the true tradition of the Christian faith descends. For we too, although unworthy, function in place of the prince of the apostles.” [Mansi 11: 1052–3]

Pope Leo to King Ervig: “We Fill the Place of Blessed Peter...”

Pope Leo wrote in a similar vein to King Ervig of Spain, opening:

The Son of God, Savior of the world... established Blessed Peter in His stead as prince of the disciples, by whose salutary preaching and tradition all regions, over which Your Highness presides, have been led to the knowledge of the truth, and the way leading to life by this apostolic [Roman] church of Christ, as if from their source... [Mansi 11: 1056]

“However lowly,” the pope added, “by virtue of the ministry entrusted to us we fill the place of Blessed Peter, prince of the apostles.” The way to begin obtaining eternal blessedness, the pope continued, is [by keeping] the rule of authentic apostolic preaching, which heretics had attempted to disturb. Yet the Gospel truth prevails, a truth which “this apostolic church of Christ has ever sustained and does sustain, and by the help of grace from on high, it persists intact.” [Mansi 11: 1056]

The pope reviewed how the emperor had written to “our predecessor Agatho, pope and pontiff of apostolic memory,” urging him to send legates from the Apostolic See and all the neighboring councils, “armed with both dogmatic letters and books and testimonies of the venerable fathers.” The legates had reached Constantinople, where the emperor, through the council, had effected a complete examination of the testimony of the fathers, “and the assertions of our apostolic pontiffs already mentioned.” As a result, the pope continued, the purity of the true faith had been shown “by the legates of the Apostolic See.” The council had confirmed the true faith by defining the two natural wills and operations, divine and human, in the Son of God, Jesus Christ. [Mansi 11: 1056–7]

As for “the authors of heretical assertion,” Leo continued, they had been condemned and cast out of the unity of the Church: Theodore of Pharan, Cyrus of Alexandria, Sergius, Pyrrhus, Paul and Peter, [former bishops] of Constantinople, “and together with them Honorius of Rome, who allowed the rule of apostolic tradition, which he received from his predecessors, to be stained.” [Mansi 11: 1057]

The *Liber Diurnus*, a collection of formulas used in the Apostolic See well into the Middle Ages, contains professions of faith made by newly elected popes, which reaffirm dogmatic definitions of the early ecumenical councils. One of them recalls the sixth ecumenical council, which condemned “the authors of the new heretical teaching, Sergius, Pyrrhus, Paul and Peter of Constantinople, together with Honorius, who lent favor [fomentum dedit] to their depraved assertions...” [PL 105: 52]

In 684, the Fourteenth Council of Toledo, noting that it was acting

Keys Over the Christian World

in response to letters from the bishop of Rome, condemned the monothelite heresy. [Mansi 11: 1085-92]

The era of monothelitism, or so it seemed, had ended.

Chapter XVII

The Popes and Byzantium

Eleven years after the sixth ecumenical council, Emperor Justinian II called a council at Constantinople. As it met under the *troullos* or cupola of the imperial palace, eventually it came to be called the Council of Trullo. Because the fifth and sixth ecumenical councils had not enacted any disciplinary canons, the Council in Trullo believed that it was completing their work, and is often called the “Quinisext” council, literally the “fifth-sixth” council. [Mansi 11: 922 sq.]

The council enacted over a hundred canons regarding church discipline. On the one hand, in canon 2 the council accepted the canons of Sardica, which had confirmed the rights of bishops to appeal to Rome. [Mansi XI, 940]

Several canons, however, were unacceptable to Rome, and some reveal an open hostility towards western disciplines. In the first place, canon 36 renewed the provisions of canon 28 of Chalcedon, which Pope Leo had rejected:

Renewing the decrees [of the second and fourth ecumenical synods], we decree that the see of Constantinople shall enjoy the same rights as that of Old Rome, shall be highly regarded in ecclesiastical matters as that is, and shall be second after it. After Constantinople comes the see of Alexandria, then Antioch, and next that of Jerusalem. [Mansi 11: 960]

Canon 55 notes that the Romans fasted on Saturdays of Lent. Claiming that this practice violated a canon [of the apostles], the synod

Keys Over the Christian World

called for severe penalties against clergy and laity who fasted on Saturdays. [Mansi 11: 969].

Finally, canon 13 not only opposes the Roman discipline about clerical continence, it even threatens deposition for those who enforce it or submit to it! [Mansi 11: 948]

Although these canons clearly were unacceptable to Rome, Justinian II still tried to obtain the pope's signature for them. During the era of Pope Sergius I [687-701], Justinian sent several copies to Rome, signed by himself and by the eastern patriarchs. The pope was asked to sign in the first place, which had been left blank. Pope Sergius, however, refused. Unwilling to take no for an answer, Justinian tried intimidation, but according to St. Bede and Paul the Deacon, the militia of Ravenna came to the pope's defense. [*Chronicon*, Ed. J. Stevenson, *Opera Minora*, 200. *De Gest. Langob.* VI, 11. PL 95: 630]

Revolution at Constantinople

At Rome, Pope Sergius was followed by Popes John VI [701-705] and John VII [705-707], while at Constantinople Justinian II, who had been overthrown in 695, regained the throne in 705. Justinian, who still didn't consider the Council in Trullo a lost cause, summoned Pope Constantine [708-715] to Constantinople, trying to get his subscription to the canons. According to Paul the Deacon, Constantine was received "with honor" at Constantinople while Justinian, prostrating himself on the ground, asked for the pope's intercession and "renewed all the privileges of his [the Roman] church." [*Hist. of the Lombards* VI, 31. PL 95: 643-4]

A few years later, however, Justinian II was murdered, and the empire fell into the hands of Philippicus Bardanes [711-713], a monothelite bent on abolishing the sixth ecumenical council. Paul the Deacon relates that Philippicus "sent heretical letters to Pope Constantine, which he spurned, along with the council of the Apostolic See." Paul the Deacon and St. Bede add that to resist the heretical emperor, Pope Constantine put up pictures in the vestibule of St. Peter's, representing the six holy ecumenical councils.

[St. Bede, *Chronicon*, Ed. J. Stevenson, *Opera Minora*, 202. Paul the Deacon, PL 95: 645]

Theophanes, the Byzantine chronographer, explained how the catastrophe had happened. One day a monothelite monk named John had a conversation with Philippicus, who came from a patrician family. “The empire has been reserved for you,” the monk told his astonished visitor, adding:

If it is God who ordains it, what have you to oppose? Now I tell you that those who held the Sixth [Ecumenical] Council [in 681] did a very bad thing. If you become emperor, reject it, and you shall have a long and glorious reign. [A.M. 6203. PG 108: 772]

Philippicus took an oath to follow the monk’s advice, and actually became emperor in 711. The new ruler banished the legitimate patriarch, Cyrus, while John, the erstwhile monothelite monk, was made the new patriarch. [Theophanes, A.M. 6203]

Within two years, however, Philippicus was overthrown by Anastasius II Artemius [713–716], who was orthodox. According to Paul the Deacon, Anastasius sent letters to Pope Constantine at Rome, proclaiming himself a Catholic and a supporter of the sixth ecumenical council. [PL 95: 645–6]

Fearing the loss of his see, Patriarch John consecrated Anastasius, restored the sixth ecumenical council, and sent a long letter of apology and excuses to Pope Constantine, “canonically reckoning” him as “head of the Christian priesthood.” The disgraced patriarch asked for mercy, writing:

You are the disciple and successor of him who heard from the mouth of the Master: “Simon, behold Satan has desired to sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail, and do you, when you have been converted, strengthen your brethren.” You must then carefully administer correction but even more carefully

administer mercy; for the Lord makes the leader of the apostles recognize by his own experience the weakness of the flesh, so that he may understand that those who have fallen may still be lifted up... O you who are strengthened in the Lord, pray for me, most holy and blessed father. [Mansi 12: 196, 206 sq.]

John did not remain long on the patriarchal throne. In 715 he was succeeded by the aging Germanus, bishop of Cyzicus, whose promotion presented one problem: traditionally the canons prohibited the transfer of a bishop from one see to another. A synod held to legitimize the promotion of Germanus proclaimed that by the unanimous vote of the clergy, people and senate, the grace of God transferred Germanus to the see of Constantinople. According to Theophanes the Chronographer, the transfer took place “in the presence of the most holy priest Michael, representative of the apostolic throne, and of the other priests and bishops.” [A.M. 6206. PG 108: 780]

A ninth or tenth century *Life* of St. Germanus has it that the Byzantines wrote to Pope Leontius [sic] to obtain his consent to the transfer. The writer, however, was mistaken about at least one detail: there *was* no Pope Leontius. [*Bios kai politeia... Germanou*, 6. Ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Maurogordateios Vivliotheke* 2: 6]

War Against the Saints

The peace between Rome and Constantinople was interrupted when a new emperor, Leo the Isaurian [717-740], claimed that the veneration of icons within the Byzantine Church smacked of idolatry. In 726, he issued an edict equating the sacred images with idols. Led by Germanus, the orthodox faithful reacted vigorously against the new heresy, which was called *iconoclasm* from the Greek for “image-breaking.” In 729, when the emperor tried to make Patriarch Germanus subscribe to the decree of 726, Germanus resigned rather than become an accomplice of heresy, and was replaced by Anastasius, a man sharing the emperor’s views. [Zonaras, *Annals* XV, 2-3. PG 134: 1320-21]

Outside the empire, the orthodox east also protested against the iconoclastic heresy, led by Mansur, a monk of St. Sabas of Jerusalem better known as St. John Damascene. The Damascene defended the traditional faith, including the veneration of images, vigorously in his apologetical treatises.

Alerted by Germanus, Popes Gregory II [715-731] and Gregory III [731-741] refused their communion to Anastasius. John Zonaras, a Byzantine chronicler, writes that “for these reasons Gregory, who then governed the church of Old Rome, withdrew from the communion of the bishop of New Rome and those who thought the same way, and put them under a synodical anathema.” [*Annals*, XV, 4]

Noting that the pope began withholding tax payments to the empire, Zonaras added: “having therefore... withdrawn from the emperor’s obedience because of [Leo’s] perverse doctrine, Pope Gregory made a covenant with the Franks, having often attempted by letter to draw Leo back from hatred of God, and get him to return to veneration of the sacred images.” [PG 134: 1324-5]

George Cedrenus, another Byzantine chronicler, called Pope Gregory II “an apostolic man,” who was enthroned with “Peter, the *coryphaeus*.” [PG 121: 876]

The heretic emperor died in 740 and was succeeded by his son, Constantine V Copronymus [740-775], a ruthless persecutor of the images who tried to get the Byzantine Church to approve iconoclasm in a council. In February 753, 338 bishops meeting in Hieria, near Constantinople, condemned the veneration of images and the principal eastern defenders of orthodoxy—John Damascene, Germanus, and George of Cyprus. Neither the west nor the other eastern patriarchates—Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem—took part in the council. [Zonaras, *Annals* XV, 6. PG 134: 1329]

A reign of terror swept over the empire, especially against the monks, the strongest defenders of the images. Copronymus even threatened the death penalty against monastic superiors who accepted new novices. The

Byzantine Church was enriched with a myriad of martyrs from this period. One of them, a monastic known as Stephen the New, protested against the claim that the Council of Hieria was the seventh ecumenical council, asking, “How can a council be called ecumenical to which the bishop of Rome did not consent, whereas a canon exists that forbids the regulation of ecclesiastical affairs without the Pope of Rome?” [PG 100: 1143]

Turmoil at Rome

At Rome, Saints Gregory II and Gregory III were succeeded by Pope Zachary [741–752], strong defenders of orthodoxy. Zachary’s successor, the Roman priest Stephen, died within a few days without receiving episcopal consecration. Stephen has sometimes been omitted from the list of popes, but more recent chroniclers have restored his name, listing him as Stephen II. The next pope, Stephen III [752–757], was followed by his own brother, Paul I [757–767].

Meanwhile, on Pentecost 763, Patriarchs Cosmas of Alexandria, Theodore of Antioch and Theodore of Jerusalem anathematized the iconoclastic heresy. In 767, a council of Jerusalem, representing the same three eastern patriarchal sees, followed suit. The orthodox patriarchs’ profession of faith was forwarded to Pope Paul I [757–767], but he was already dead when it arrived. [Mansi 12: 272, 680]

After Pope Paul I’s death, Duke Toto of nearby Nepi seized the Lateran and intruded his brother, the layman Constantine, into the Apostolic See. The Cardinal bishops of Palestrina, Albano and Portus were intimidated into consecrating Constantine, but his “papacy” was short-lived; within a year, Constantine and Duke Toto were overthrown by a group of Lombards. On August 5, 768, Constantine was declared an intruder during an assembly of the Roman clergy and faithful, and on the next day a priest of St. Cecilia was elected as Pope Stephen IV [768–772]. [Hefele 5: 331 sq.]

Pope Stephen promptly wrote to King Pepin of the Franks [741–768], asking for his help for a great synod intended to restore order at Rome. Pepin was dead when the papal messengers arrived, but the new rulers, his

sons Charlemagne [768–814] and Carloman [768–771], sent twelve Frankish bishops to the council, which opened at the Lateran in April 769. In this sacrosanct “Mother of all the Churches,” Stephen IV, “supreme pontiff and universal pope,” called upon the head notary, Christopher, to address the council. The text prepared by Christopher, which proclaimed the Roman Church the “see of Peter, prince of the apostles,” and “head and ruler of all the churches of God,” explained how Duke Toto, violating a sworn oath, had invaded the Apostolic See, illegally installing Constantine as a false pope. The council decreed that for the future, “in accordance with what was established by Blessed Peter and his successors,” only Cardinal priests or deacons could be elected to the “height of the apostleship.” The intruder Constantine was deposed and blinded. The council also condemned iconoclasm. [Hefele 5: 336 sq.; Mansi 12: 715 sq.]

The Second Council of Nicea

At Constantinople the persecution began abating when Copronymus died in 775, leaving the throne to his son Leo IV [775–780], who only lasted for five years. Because Leo’s son Constantine VI [780–796] was only a child, the government was assumed by Leo’s widow Irene, an orthodox defender of the images. Irene worked to replace iconoclast bishops with orthodox ones, and succeeded in getting the patriarch, Paul IV, who had sworn allegiance to iconoclasm, to retract his errors. Paul IV died in 784. [DTC 7: 584–5]

The new rulers chose Tarasius, former imperial secretary, as the new patriarch of Constantinople but Tarasius refused, declaring that he could not preside over a church that was separated from the rest of the churches and anathematized by them. “If you allow an ecumenical council to be gathered and the churches to be united, I will accept the designation,” Tarasius added. This proposition was accepted by all; Tarasius was ordained and the patriarch and rulers sent a delegation to Old Rome, where pope Hadrian I [772–795] presided, and to the other patriarchs, asking them to send representatives to the ecumenical council, which opened in September 787 at Nicea. [Zonaras, Annals XV, 11. PG 134: 1345]

Keys Over the Christian World

Pope Hadrian's letter to the emperors was read at the second session of the council. Expressing joy that God had deigned to call the rulers to the integrity of the faith, Hadrian urged them to persevere like Constantine and Helen, "who promulgated the orthodox faith, and exalted your spiritual mother, the Roman Church, and together with the other orthodox emperors venerated her as head of all the churches." Hadrian exhorted them to follow the traditions of the orthodox faith, and embrace "the teaching of the Church of Blessed Peter, prince of the apostles," as previous holy emperors had done from of old, loving [Peter's] vicar from their inmost heart "in accordance with our holy Roman Church." May this prince of the apostles, the pope continued, protect you more intensely and lay low all the barbarian nations at your feet, showing you to be victorious everywhere, "for sacred authority makes clear the distinctive marks of his dignity, and how great a veneration ought to be shown to his supreme see by all the faithful throughout the world." [Mansi 12: 1056-7]

Pope Hadrian added:

For the Lord set this same keybearer of the kingdom of heaven before all as their prince, and by Him, he is honored with this privilege, by which the keys of the kingdom of heaven were conferred upon him. For he himself, who was set in such a lofty honor, first merited to confess the faith upon which the church of Christ is founded. The blessedness of rewards followed the blessed confession, by the preaching of which the holy universal Church has been illuminated, and the rest of God's churches have received instructions in the faith. For the very prince of the apostles, Blessed Peter, who first sat upon the Apostolic See, left the principality of his apostleship and pastoral care to his successors, who were to sit perenially upon his most sacred see, [and] upon those pontiffs succeeding him he also, by a divine command, conferred the power of authority such as it was granted to him by the Lord God, our Savior... [Mansi 12: 1057]

In the name of these pontiffs, and the tradition they represented, the pope defended the veneration of images, invoking scriptural proofs, eastern and western fathers, and previous popes. He urged the rulers to restore the veneration of images, “observing the tradition of this our sacrosanct Roman Church,” and spurn the deceitfulness of heretics, “so that you may be received into the arms of this our holy, Catholic and apostolic and blameless Roman Church.” [Mansi 12: 1057-72]

Up to this point, the pope’s letter was read to the council. The letter continued, however, raising certain issues which were too embarrassing or too sensitive for the sovereigns to permit them to be read aloud. In the first place, the pope asked the sovereigns to restore the papal lands, the patrimony of St. Peter, “whose see, exercising the primacy throughout the world, has been constituted head of all the Churches of God.” The pope reiterated that Blessed Peter, ruling the Church by the Lord’s command, continued to hold and ever does hold the principality, and this precept of the universal Church must be followed especially by the first see, “which both confirms each synod by her authority, and preserves them by her continual rule.” [Mansi 12: 1073-74]

The pope also disapproved of the promotion of Tarasius to the patriarchate from the lay state, and of the title ‘ecumenical patriarch.’ If this title were taken literally, the pope reasoned, Tarasius would even have the primacy over the holy Roman Church, head of all God’s churches, “which is clearly ridiculous to all Christians.” The pope continued:

...for throughout the world, the principality and authority were given by the very Redeemer of the world himself to Blessed Peter the apostle, and through the same apostle, whose place we hold, however unworthy, the holy, Catholic and apostolic Roman church has held up to now, and forever holds, the principality and the authority of power... [Mansi 12: 1074]

Queried by Tarasius, the legates assured him of the genuineness of the letters. Cosmas the deacon, notary to the council, declared that the

Keys Over the Christian World

pope had written another letter. “Let it be read,” the council replied. [Mansi 12: 1056-7]

Although the pope’s letter expressed unhappiness that Tarasius had been rushed through the orders against the canons, the pope was pleased at his orthodox faith. Condemning iconoclasm as contrary to the tradition of the Fathers and the authority of the Apostolic See, the pope cited Mt. 16, 18: “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church...” adding, “*his see is preeminent throughout the world, holding the primacy, and is head of all the churches of God. Wherefore the same Blessed Peter the apostle, by the Lord’s command feeding the sheep... ever held and does retain the primacy,*” and, “if your holiness wishes to adhere to him, and is endeavoring to keep the sacred and orthodox faith... of our apostolic see, which is head of all the churches of God,” then urge the rulers to restore the veneration of images. [Mansi 12: 1077-84]

The papal legates asked, “Let the most holy Patriarch Tarasius of the royal city say whether or not he accepts the letters of the most holy Pope Hadrian of Old Rome.” Tarasius answered:

The divine apostle Paul... writing to the Romans, approving their concern for having genuine faith in Christ our true God, spoke as follows: *your faith is announced in the entire world.* Wherefore Hadrian, bishop of Old Rome, a participant with those who received this testimony, wrote expressly and truly to our religious emperors, and to our lowliness, beautifully confirming that he holds the ancient tradition of the Catholic Church. Wherefore we too have so confessed, and do confess, and will confess... [Mansi 12: 1084-6]

The council added: “the entire sacred synod so teaches.” The legates said: “Let the holy synod tell us whether or not it accepts the letters of the most holy pope of Old Rome.” The council said: “we follow them, receive them and admit them.” [Mansi 12: 1084-6]

Several metropolitans spoke in approval of the pope's letter. Constantine, bishop of Constantia in Cyprus, said:

In every respect I agree with the directive sent to our good rulers by Hadrian, the most holy pope of Old Rome, and I agree also with the letter sent to the most holy patriarch, and so I confess, and with this faith I will proceed to the judgment seat of Christ our true God. [Mansi 12: 1087]

The conciliar acts contain two letters of St. Tarasius in response to Pope Hadrian. In the first letter, Tarasius congratulates the pontiff for having sent a 'correct and blameless' profession of faith, noting with satisfaction that Hadrian had sent legates having the same name as Peter, prince [*protarchon*] of the apostles. In the second letter, addressing Pope Hadrian, Tarasius again mentioned "the divine apostle Peter, whose chair your fraternal holiness has obtained..." and continued, "therefore your fraternal holiness, endowed with the high priesthood, with reason and in accordance with God's will ordaining hierarchical piety, has the utmost renown of glory." [Mansi 13: 457-72]

The council collections also contain letters attributed to Pope Gregory II. One is to St. Germanus of Constantinople, encouraging him in the defense of the sacred images and citing the fathers and scripture in defense of orthodoxy. [Mansi 13: 91-100]

Two other letters to Leo the Isaurian in 726 are attributed to Pope Gregory. In these letters Gregory, claiming "power and authority from St. Peter, prince of the apostles," rebukes the emperor and inveighs on a lengthy scriptural defense of the veneration of images. Modern scholars are divided about the genuineness of the letters. [Mansi 12: 959-82]

A Challenge to the Pope: The Council of Frankfurt

Although the Second Council of Nicea had reaffirmed the traditional faith, initially it was not well received in Charlemagne's domains. The Greek *proskunesis*, referring to the prostration before the sacred images,

had been translated as *adoratio*, implying that the council had approved the “adoration” of images. The Council of Frankford, in 794, even condemned the “new synod of the Greeks, which they held at Constantinople, for the adoration of images”! [Mansi 13: 909]

The challenge to the seventh ecumenical council may have seemed like the theological equivalent of amateur hour, but it had to be answered. Pope Hadrian defended the Second Council of Nicea in a letter to Charlemagne. Reminding the emperor that by the Lord’s voice, the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and the care and principality of the entire Church were entrusted to St. Peter, prince of all the apostles, Pope Hadrian cited the scriptural texts, *Feed my sheep...* [Jn. 21] *I have prayed for thee...* [Lk. 22] *Thou art Peter...* [Mt. 16], and continued:

Behold, the care and principality of the entire Church is entrusted to him. And he himself [Peter] is known to have left his place, [and] the care of the Church, to the pontiffs, his vicars. For he also received the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and the power of binding and loosing is given to him... [Mansi 13: 759]

Noting that a royal representative had submitted objections to the seventh ecumenical council, Hadrian proposed to respond, “not as defending men, but holding the old tradition of the holy, Catholic and apostolic Roman Church” and “the pristine doctrine of our predecessors, the holy pontiffs.” The pope continued with detailed rebuttals to objections against the recent ecumenical council. [Mansi 13: 760 sq.]

Monk Against an Empire?

When Patriarch Tarasius died in 806, Nicephorus, former imperial secretary, was elected to succeed him. Emperor Nicephorus pressured the patriarch to reinstate the priest Joseph, who had been deposed by St. Tarasius for having blessed the marriage of Constantine VI to the concubine Theodota. This incident was known as the *Moechian affair*, from the Greek for adultery. Reluctantly, Patriarch Nicephorus restored Joseph to the priestly

rank and office of *economos* or treasurer. [*Vita Theodori*. PG 99: 153–6]

The rehabilitation of Joseph caused a storm of protest led by the monk Theodore, spiritual father of the monks of Studion, who withdrew from the patriarch's communion. [Theophanes, A.M. 6301]

Theodore, who had many relatives in monastic life, was the nephew of Abbot Plato of Saccudion, and had been ordained a priest by St. Tarasius. The Studites were known for their strongly orthodox spirit and strict interpretation of canon law. Outraged at the restoration of Joseph, Theodore wrote to Pope Leo III:

To the most holy and chiefest father of fathers, to my lord Leo, apostolic pope—Theodore, lowliest of priests and abbot of Studion.

Since it is to the great Peter that Christ our God gave the keys of the kingdom of heaven along with the dignity of chief shepherd, it is to Peter, that is, his successor, that it is necessary to refer every innovation which is made in the Catholic Church by those who turn aside from the truth. That is what we humble and lowly monks have learned from the ancient fathers. Therefore, because a new teaching has arisen in the midst of the Church here, we believed that we ought to submit it to the messenger of your supreme beatitude, first through one of our fathers, the most holy archimandrite Epiphanius, and then by this simple letter.

O divine head of all heads, a synod of prevaricators has been held, as the prophet Jeremias says— a council of adulterers. These men have not been content to conspire in favor of the priest who blessed the adulterous marriage and to receive him into communion, but, to merit the name of perfect heretic, have excommunicated in a second synod those who do not cleave to their error, or rather the Catholic Church itself... [PG 99: 1017 sq.]

The monk Theodore continued:

I borrow now the cry of the *coryphaeus* of the apostles, calling Christ to his assistance when the waves of the sea had surged upwards, and I say to your Christ-imitating Beatitude: *O arch-shepherd of the church which is under heaven, save us now; we perish.* Imitate Christ your Master; stretch out your hand to the Church which is among us as he stretched out his hand to Peter... Emulate, we beg you, the great pope whose name you bear, and just as he, when the heresy of Eutyches appeared, stood erect spiritually as a lion with his dogmatic letters, so in your turn (I dare to say it because of your name) roar divinely, or rather send forth your thunder against the present heresy. For if they, usurping an authority which does not belong to them, have dared to convene a heretical council, whereas *those who follow ancient custom do not even have the right of convening an orthodox one without your knowledge*, it seems absolutely necessary, we dare to say to you, that your divine primacy should call together a lawful council, so that the Catholic dogma may drive out heresy and that your primacy may neither be anathematized by these new voices lacking authority, nor may wills disposed to evil find in this adulterous council an excuse for being involved in sin.

It is in order to obey your divine authority as chief pastor that we have set forth these things as it befitted our nothingness, we the least members of the church. For the rest, we beg Your Holiness to count us among your sheep and to enlighten and strengthen us by your holy prayers... my father and companion the monk, as well as my brother the archbishop of Thessalonica, are imprisoned on other islands. But they say the same things that I do, and with me they prostrate themselves at the sacred feet of Your Beatitude. [PG 99: 1017-21]

Theodore also wrote to Archimandrite Basil of the monastery of

St. Sabas in Rome:

...we lowly ones longed to be helped by the mediation of the first see [*protothronou*] and the divinely given authority, but we did not yet dare to ask such a thing. Now that God has put the thought in his heart, although unworthy, we ask for this good. May it be for the glory of God and the greatest benefit of the church, for as there is one Lord, one faith, one God, it is clear that there is one Church, although she exercises highest authority [*koruphiazoi*] from among you... [Ep. 192. Mai, *Nova Patrum Bibliotheca* 8: 164-6]

Writing to John, bishop of Monobasia, and the hegumen Methodius, Theodore calls the Roman Church the “first foundation” [*protobathrouses*] of all churches, and asks them to keep praying until “what has been divinely decreed by the holy protothrone” has been carried out. [Mai, *Nova Patrum Bibliotheca* 8: 166-7]

In another letter, Theodore explained at length that the ‘heresy of adultery’ is the negation of both the Old and New Testaments, and insisted:

O most blessed one, a synod has been held... for the condemnation of the Gospel, *the keys of which you have received, through the mediation of the leader [protostatou] of the apostles, and his successors up to him who preceded your most sacred head...* We, the humble children of the Catholic Church, believed that it was necessary to inform you about this—you, the first [of pastors] and our apostolic head. [PG 99: 1021, 1025]

When an imperial party accused *Theodore* of complicity with heresy, the holy monk responded:

It is strange that we who suffer for Catholic truth should have heretical sentiments. Silence to every mouth that accuses us and calumniates us. We are orthodox although

sinner, O blessed Father, and we profess the apostolic faith without any alteration. We recognize every general council and private one that is approved, with all the holy canons enacted there; we detest and anathematize all heresies and heretics... As for us, we are pure from every heretical sentiment thanks to your most holy prayers, O most venerable one... [PG 99: 1028]

Patriarch Nicephorus Writes to Rome

Under a new emperor, Michael Rhangabe, Patriarch Nicephorus was able to send synodical letters to Rome in 811. In his letter, Nicephorus described how he had been an imperial secretary, but after repeatedly considering the fleeting nature of worldly affairs and dignities, had sought out a place of solitude. Later Nicephorus was led, against his original wishes, to accept the dignity of the patriarchate. Offering an orthodox confession of faith, Nicephorus commended himself to Pope Leo's prayers, asking Leo to strengthen him, "so that by your precepts [*nomothesia*s] and teachings [*didaskalia*s], we may persist in stability in this faith... free from all defect." [Mansi 14: 29-56]

Theodore had been advocating all along that Nicephorus regularize his own situation by writing to the pope. Writing to the Imperial Sacellarius Leo, about 820, Theodore had rejected the idea of a conference where Catholics and heretics would discuss their differences on an equal level, insisting instead that letters be sent to the pontiff of Rome, and that "from there the certainty of the faith must be received." Theodore remarked:

Let [Patriarch Nicephorus] assemble a synod of those with whom he has been at variance, if representatives of the other patriarchs cannot be present, [although] it certainly is possible if the emperor should wish the [patriarch] of the west to be present, *to whom belongs authority of the ecumenical synod*, but let him make peace and union by sending his synodical letters to the protothrone [the pope]... [PG 99: 1420]

Meanwhile, Theodore and several other archimandrites, faced with

a new outbreak of iconoclasm, had appealed to Pope Paschal:

Your supreme beatitude has undoubtedly learned what misfortune our sins have drawn down upon our church. We have become, to speak as the Scripture, the conversation and proverb of all the nations, but perhaps you have not been fully informed by letter. This is why we lowly monks, and the least among the members of Christ, since our chief is a prisoner and the first among our fathers are scattered hither and thither, have been able, thanks to your vicinity and our common agreement in mind and words, to write you this letter, although it be very bold.

Listen, O apostolic head, divinely established shepherd of Christ's sheep, doorkeeper of the heavenly kingdom, rock of the faith on which the Catholic Church has been built. For you are Peter—you are the successor of Peter, whose throne you grace and direct. Cruel wolves have broken into the Lord's flock, and hell has risen up against it as [never] before... Come to our assistance, and do not repulse us forever... To you did Christ our God say, "When you have been converted, strengthen your brethren." Now is the time and the place: help us, you who have been established by God for that purpose... May the church which is under heaven learn that those who have had this audacity, and who anathematize our holy fathers, are struck with anathema. You would do a work thereby pleasing to God, it would be a joy for saints and angels, a support for those who waver, a confirmation for those who are strong, a resurrection for those who have fallen, a joy for the entire orthodox church, and for your position as chiefest [koruphaioteti], according to the expression of those of old, eternal memory. [PG 99: 1152-3]

When a certain Theodotus intruded into the patriarchal throne, replacing Nicephorus, the lawful patriarch, Theodore appealed to Rome once again. The appeal was addressed...

To the most holy father, leading luminary of the universe, our lord and master, the apostolic pope... From the height of heaven the glittering sun of the morning has sent us its rays; *Christ our God has established Your Beatitude in the west on the first apostolic throne as a divine torch for the illumination of the church which is under heaven...* we learned from our brethren, who had been sent to you, all the great things said and done by your holy headship. You did not admit the heretical deputies into your presence, but sent them away when they were still far away... you sympathized with our misfortunes as with the misfortunes of your own sheep, as our letters were read and our messengers heard without delay. *And we lowly monks indeed recognize as a manifest successor of the coryphaeus of the apostles the [bishop] who presides over the Church of Rome,* and we are certain that God has not abandoned the church of our country, because divine providence has reserved His assistance for it since the beginning... which He gives by you and by you alone. For from the beginning, you are the ever pure and ever limpid stream of orthodoxy; you are the tranquil harbor where the whole church finds sure shelter against all the tempests of heresy, you are the citadel chosen by God to be the assured refuge of salvation. [PG 99: 1153-6]

Theodore complained about the behavior of the Byzantine Church, writing:

Byzantium has shaken off the yoke of the gospel as a heifer pricked by the goad; she shakes off the harness. She is furiously agitated like the Corybantes; she is intoxicated with blood as a lioness; as the serpent she stops her ears; she kicks against the censure. *A voice made itself heard to warn her, equal to a voice from heaven—the voice of the supreme throne of Rome: ‘what have you done? You have denied Christ by forbidding his image, that of the Mother of God and all the saints... Open your ear to obedience; listen to the words of the gospel, an apostle, a prophet, a father.’* But

Byzantium did not listen, did not receive those words. She raised her head against almighty God, outraging Christ and trampling upon his chosen saints... [PG 99: 1280]

Theodore praised Pope Paschal I's interventions on behalf of orthodoxy, writing:

[The iconoclasts] have separated themselves from the body of Christ, and from *the chief throne in which Christ placed the keys of faith: against which the gates of hell, namely the mouths of heretics, have not prevailed up to now, nor shall they ever prevail, according to the promise of him who does not lie.* Therefore let the most blessed and apostolic [Pope] Paschal, who is worthy of his name, rejoice, for he has fulfilled the work of Peter... [PG 99: 1281]

From his last exile, St. Theodore defended the veneration of sacred images and implored Emperor Michael to restore the union with Rome, writing:

The Universal Church, from the time of the apostolic preaching, as paintings and written documents attest, bears and venerates in the temples and on the vessels and sacred vestments the holy image of Christ, of the Theotokos, of the angels and saints. Yet the church among us has recently separated from the four patriarchs, and without reason has violated the Christian law. But now is the favorable time, O Emperor, friend of Christ, now is the day of salvation, the moment to be reconciled with Christ, under the auspices and the mediation of your authority amicable to peace, *to unite ourselves to Rome, the summit of all the Churches of God, and through her to the three patriarchs...* [PG 99: 1309]

The emperor had planned to hold a conference between defenders and opponents of the sacred images, in order to resolve their differences. Pointing out that apostolic precepts forbade such a discussion with the

heterodox, Theodore urged the emperor:

...order that the exposition of the faith sent from Old Rome be received, following what has been the practice from all time by our fathers. For this Church, O Christ-imitating emperor, is the *chiefest of all the churches of God, where the first to hold the throne was Peter, to whom the Lord said: "Thou art Peter..."* [PG 99: 1332]

Reconciliation at Constantinople

Although St. Nicephorus, by his behavior during the "Moechian affair," had begun his patriarchate on the wrong foot, he was eventually reconciled with St. Theodore. [*Vita Theodori*. PG 99: 164–5]

Nicephorus speaks of the Apostolic See in his own apologetical writings. In the *Apologeticus maior*, he defended the legitimacy of the seventh ecumenical council, which condemned iconoclasm, citing participation by all the patriarchates, particularly that of Old Rome. The [Second] Council of Nicea, he explained, had been gathered as regularly and legally as possible, since, in conformity with the divine statutes fixed from the beginning, "there held the head and was seated":

From the region of the west, that is, Old Rome, no negligible contingent, without whom a doctrine which has just been agitated in the Church, after having been long sanctioned by canonical decisions and priestly custom, could not be fully approved and definitively regulated, because they have received the principality of the priesthood, and have been entrusted with the dignity of the leading apostles.

Further, that which, on the part of Byzantium, (I mean New Rome, which is now first among us, and claims the pre-eminence over cities by virtue of the royal supremacy) sat at the government of the sacred sees and distinguished itself by the prestige of virtues;

Next, invited from the side of the east, to hold the place of the presidents of the apostolic sees, and to speak on behalf of our holy dogmas, most venerable men, chosen for their life and gift of speech... all the bishops under the sun [who] were seated... concerned only with the truth, under the effects of grace from on high, caused their unity of opinion and language to shine... Thus a law of the Church which goes back to the beginning prescribes that all doubts and controversies arising in the Church be resolved and defined by ecumenical councils, with the agreement and sanction of the bishops of the greater apostolic thrones... [PG 100: 597]

Ignatius the deacon, a disciple of Nicephorus, composed a *Life* of the saint which presents him as defending the images against Emperor Leo the Armenian. Citing the examples of Rome, “the first-laid see of the apostles,” Antioch, “chair of the *coryphaeus* of the apostles” and the other patriarchal sees, St. Nicephorus pointed out that they all opposed iconoclasm. [A.S. 7: 713]

Papadopoulos-Kerameus published a work of Nicephorus called *Symbol of Faith*, a brief refutation of the Iconoclast bishops. The Iconoclasts, Nicephorus explains, are cut off from the Church because they dissent from the teaching of the apostolic sees:

That they are rejected from the Catholic Church, is attested and confirmed by the letters sent a while ago by the most holy and most blessed Archbishop of Old Rome, that is, the first and apostolic throne, and also by his lieutenants and representatives, who not only held no communion with them, but were unwilling so much as to see them or hear them in any way, and finally even refused to eat with them. [Analekta Hierosolymitikes Stachilogias 1: 460]

Nicephorus expresses a similar train of thought in his *Apologeticus minor pro imaginibus*. Citing the synodal letter of Pope Agatho to the sixth

ecumenical council, St. Nicephorus wrote against the iconoclasts:

Finally, they are excluded from the society of churchmen and driven from the sacerdotal college by several other things, and principally by what we find in the sixth ecumenical council, as it appears in the synodical letter of Agatho, Pope of Old Rome, for it says: “any bishops who will wish to preach sincerely with us what is contained in the confession of our lowliness regarding our apostolic faith, we receive them as having the same sentiments, the same priesthood, the same ministry, the same faith, or to speak more simply, as our spiritual brothers and fellow bishops. As for those who are unwilling to confess [the faith] in like manner, we judge them enemies of the Catholic and apostolic confession, and worthy of eternal damnation. Nor shall we ever admit them into fellowship with our lowliness, except after their correction. Nor may anybody think that we are going beyond anything handed down by the ancients...” [PG 100: 841]

The Triumph of Orthodoxy

Although iconoclasm had been defeated at the seventh ecumenical council in 787, new outbreaks continued during the early ninth century. The *Life* of a Byzantine saint, Joseph the Hymnographer, describes how, [in 841], an “almost infinite” multitude of monks prevailed upon another Byzantine saint, the wonder-worker Gregory the Decapolite, to send Joseph to inform the pope and the Romans about the persecution. [A.S. 9: 272. Cf. PG 100: 1199-1200]

The situation changed when the monk Methodius was raised to the see of Constantinople in March 843. Methodius had taken refuge at Rome decades earlier, and had personally brought back a letter from Pope Paschal I [817-824]. On March 11, 843, first Sunday of Lent, a solemn celebration at Constantinople marked the permanent triumph of orthodoxy over iconoclasm. The era of iconoclasm had finally ended. At Constantinople, a saint sat on the patriarchal throne. [Pargoire, 269 sq.]

Chapter XVIII

Keys in the West

According to St. Prosper's *Chronicle*, after the death of Sixtus III [432-440] the Roman Church went without a bishop for forty days. The deacon Leo, who was on a diplomatic mission in Gaul, was called to Rome and amidst general rejoicing was ordained as the next bishop. [PL 51: 599]

In a series of sermons for the anniversary of his ordination, Pope Leo discussed the issue of authority. Speaking before the bishops of Italy, he extolled "the well ordered charity of the entire Church, which receives Peter in the see of Peter, and which, out of love for so great a shepherd, does not slacken even in so unequal an heir," and requested prayers for himself, "whom God willed to preside at the helm of His Church, to show the riches of His grace." [Sermon 2. PL 54: 144]

In another anniversary sermon, Leo remarked that "the solidity of that faith, which is praised in the prince of the apostles, is perpetual, and just as what Peter believed about Christ endures, what Christ established in Peter abides as well." [PL 54: 145-6]

Peter's governing authority, the pope proclaimed, is an enduring reality in the Church:

The disposition of truth, therefore, remains, and Blessed Peter, persevering in the strength of the rock which he has received, does not relinquish the helm of the Church which he has once received. For thus has he been ordained to take precedence of the rest, so that, as he is called 'rock,' as he is pronounced to be the foundation, as he is established as doorkeeper of the Kingdom of Heaven, as he is put in

charge of judging what must be bound and loosed— and what is defined by his judgments is destined to abide even in heaven— we may learn what manner of fellowship he has with Christ by the very mystery of his names. Now he still performs with greater fulness and power what has been entrusted to him, and he pursues every aspect of his duties and cares in Him and with Him through whom he was glorified. If therefore anything be rightly done by us, and rightly discerned, if anything is obtained from God's mercy by daily supplications, it is by the works and merits of him whose power lives and whose authority excels in his see... in the person of my lowliness, he is to be understood and honored, in whom both the solicitude of all shepherds perseveres along with the watch of the sheep entrusted to him, and whose dignity does not fail even in an unworthy heir. [Sermon 3. PL 54: 146–7]

Before an assembly of Italian bishops who were celebrating the anniversary of his elevation, Leo said:

...Although then, beloved, we have reason for rejoicing in the sharing of this gift, we shall have a truer and more excellent reason to rejoice if we do not dwell in the consideration of our lowliness, for it is far more useful and more fitting to raise the mind's eye so as to consider the glory of the most blessed apostle Peter, and to celebrate this day especially in honor of him *who was inundated so copiously from the very fountain of all charisms, that although he received many by himself, nothing passed to others without his participation... from the whole world the one Peter is chosen to preside over the calling of all the nations, and over all the apostles and fathers of the Church so that, although there be many priests and many shepherds in God's people, yet Peter in the proper sense governs them all, whom Christ also rules principally. The divine condescendence, beloved, gives this man a great and wonderful share of its own power, and if it wished any of it to be common to*

the other princes, what it denied not to others, it never gave except through him..

...the Lord asks all the apostles what men think of Him... he who is first in the apostolic dignity is also first to confess the Lord. When he had said: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God," Jesus answered him: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah, because flesh and blood has not revealed this to thee, but my Father who is in heaven"—that is, thou art blessed because my Father taught thee, nor has earthly opinion deceived thee, but heavenly inspiration instructed thee; not flesh and blood, but He whose only-begotten Son I am, has indicated Me to thee.

"And I," He says, "say unto thee,"—that is, just as my Father has manifested my divinity to thee, so I make known thine own excellence unto thee—"That thou art Peter,"—that is, although I am the inviolable rock, the cornerstone who make both one, the foundation outside which no one can lay another—*yet art thou also a rock, because thou art solidified by My power, so that whatever is proper to me by power is common to thee by participation with Me*—"and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Upon this strength, He says, I shall build an eternal temple; the sublimity of my Church, which is to be raised to heaven itself, shall rise in the firmness of this faith.

This confession the gates of hell shall not hold back, nor shall the bonds of death bind it down, for this voice is the voice of life. And as it raises those who confess it unto heavenly places, so it plunges those who deny it into hell. Therefore it is said to the most blessed Peter: "I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in

heaven.”

The right of this power passed on, indeed, to the other apostles, and the constitution of this decree extended to all the princes of the Church, but not in vain what is intimated to all is commended to one. For this is entrusted to Peter singularly, because the pattern of Peter is set before all the rulers of the Church. The privilege of Peter, therefore, remains, wherever judgment is laid down in accordance with his equity. Nor is severity or pardon excessive, where nothing shall be bound, nothing loosed, except what Blessed Peter shall have either bound or loosed. As his Passion approached, which was going to disturb the constancy of His disciples, the Lord says: “Simon, Simon, behold Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail, and when you are converted, strengthen your brethren.” The danger from the temptation of fear was common to all the apostles, and they had equal need of the assistance of divine protection, since the devil desired to upset, to crush all: and yet from the Lord a special care is given to Peter, and He prays specifically for the faith of Peter, as if the state of the rest would be more certain, if the mind of their ruler were not overcome. In Peter, therefore, the strength of all is fortified, and the assistance of divine grace is so ordered that the firmness, which through Christ is given to Peter, is through Peter conveyed to the apostles.

Since then, beloved, we see so great a protection divinely instituted for us, it is reasonable and just that we rejoice in the merits and dignity of our leader, giving thanks to the eternal king, our Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, *for having given such great power to him whom He made prince of the entire Church, so that if anything, even in our time, be rightly done and rightly disposed through us, it must be attributed to the working and governance of him, to whom it was said: “and thou, when thou art converted, confirm thy brethren,” and to whom the*

Lord, after His resurrection, in response to the threefold profession of eternal love, said three times, by way of mystical insinuation, "Feed my sheep."

Without a doubt, the pious shepherd does so to this day, and he fulfills the command of his Lord, confirming us by his exhortations, and praying for us incessantly, so that we may not be overcome by any temptation... [PL 54: 149-52]

The Pope and the West

Early in his pontificate, Leo wrote to the bishops of Campania, Picenum and Tuscany, reminding them of the canons: a bishop must not ordain another man's servant, or a man married to a widow, or a man who has had more than one wife. As for those who have been admitted, Leo added, "we command, by the authority of the Apostolic See, that they are to be kept out of ecclesiastical offices." Repeating traditional prohibitions against usury, he wrote:

We command that all the decretal constitutions, not only of [Pope] Innocent of blessed memory but of all our predecessors, which have been promulgated about ecclesiastical orders and the discipline of the canons, must be observed by Your Charity so that, if anybody offend against them, he must realize that in the future pardon will not be granted to him. [Ep. 4. PL 54: 610-14]

The pope also wrote to the Italian bishops, warning them that Manicheans had been detected in Rome, and urging them to search them out with diligence. [Ep. 7. PL 54: 620-22]

The Problem of Hilary of Arles

About 430, the monk Hilary became the new bishop of Arles. Although Hilary was a zealous bishop, at times he was a bit *too* zealous.

Some time after 440, he deposed Celidonius, bishop of Besancon, on the grounds that Celidonius had married a widow and thus, according to canon law, was ineligible for the episcopate. Celidonius went to Rome, as did Hilary, and the case was re-examined before Pope Leo. At the council, Celidonius was rehabilitated, and Hilary, called to account for his abuses of authority, chose to take flight unexpectedly.

About 445, Pope Leo wrote to the bishops of Vienne, reminding them that the Lord Jesus placed the mystery of the apostolic preaching principally in Blessed Peter, who was supreme among all the apostles, and from him, as if from a certain head, He had willed all His gifts to flow into His body, so that anybody who would dare depart from the solidity of Peter should understand that he is outside of the divine mystery. Thus the building of the eternal temple, through the marvelous grace of God, consists in the solidity of Peter. [PL 54: 629]

Announcing the abuses committed by Hilary, Pope Leo continued:

...from this well trodden path, which was ever well preserved by the ancients with salutary results, Hilary has departed, disturbing the concord of the bishops by novel presumption, so desiring to subject you to his authority that he would not allow himself to be subject to blessed Peter the apostle, claiming for himself [the right to hold] ordinations throughout all the Churches of Gaul, and transferring to himself the dignity due to metropolitan bishops, belittling as well, with arrogant words, the reverence due the most blessed Peter. Yet to him, beyond the rest, was the power of binding and loosing granted, and the care of feeding the sheep more especially enjoined. Whoever deems that his principality is to be denied, cannot in any way diminish his dignity, but rather sinks himself into hell, puffed up by the spirit of his pride. [PL 54: 630]

The pope's letter mentions an appeal by another bishop, Projectus, who had become ill. Although Projectus was not even a suffragan of Arles,

Hilary had ordained a successor for him. Pope Leo, who found the deposition of an ailing bishop uncanonical and inhumane, reinstated Projectus. [PL 54: 631-2]

As he reversed the decisions against Celidonius and Projectus, Pope Leo remarked that Hilary was usurping rights that no bishop of Arles had had before Patroclus. True, Patroclus had been granted extraordinary authority at Arles, but that grant had been temporary and was reversed by a more judicious decision. The rights of metropolitans must be respected, and new bishops must be chosen by a canonical election, not arbitrarily imposed. As for synods, each province should be content with its own Council, and Hilary should not be interfering with other provinces. [PL 54: 631-4]

Hilary had been proceeding throughout the provinces with a military escort, conducting illicit ordinations and imposing his own candidates upon the people. Pope Leo penalized Hilary by depriving him of his metropolitan rights: Hilary, in effect, was demoted to a simple bishop, with no more rights over the province of Vienne. The metropolitan rights were temporarily transferred to another bishop, Leontius. Hilary was even forbidden to participate in episcopal ordinations; Pope Leo thought that he should be happy to have been treated mercifully. [PL 54: 633-6]

Pope Leo urged the bishops to observe “what we have decreed, by God’s inspiration and that of the most blessed apostle Peter,” asking that “the diligence of the Apostolic See be preserved unblemished among you.” [PL 54: 635-6]

The pope’s letter was accompanied by a decree of Emperor Valentinian, and sent into Gaul in July 445. The decree, incidentally, was co-signed by the eastern emperor, Theodosius. Declaring that the one support of their empire was the divine favor, and in the Christian faith, the rulers decreed regarding the Roman bishop:

Since therefore the merit of St. Peter, who is the prince of the episcopal crown, and the dignity of the city of Rome, as

well as the authority of the sacred synod have confirmed the primacy of the apostolic see, let no presumption attempt anything illicit [sic] without the authority of that see. For then shall peace be observed in the churches, when the whole world acknowledges its ruler... [Mommson, *Libri Theodosiani XVI cum Constitutionibus Sirmondianis*, Berlin 1954, Vol. II, *Leges Novellae*, 102]

As for Hilary of Arles, the rulers continued, we have learned from a faithful report from “the venerable man Leo, Pope of Rome,” that he has usurped the right of judging and ordaining the bishops, without having consulted the bishop of Rome. Hilary had violated the reverence due to the Apostolic See; it was unlawful “to disobey the commands of the Roman Bishop,” the emperors remarked, “for what in the Churches could be beyond the authority of so great a pontiff?” The rulers added:

We decree that it is unlawful, both for the bishops of Gaul and those of the other provinces to attempt anything, contrary to the old custom, without the authority of the venerable man, the Pope of the Eternal City. But let this be a law unto them and unto all, whatever the Apostolic See’s authority has established, or shall have established: so that any bishop failing to answer a summons to judgment by the bishop of Rome should be compelled to be present by the governor of the province, to the complete observance of what our divine fathers conferred upon the Roman Church. [Mommson, *Libri Theodosiani XVI cum Constitutionibus Sirmondianis*, Vol. II, 102-3]

The fifth century *Life* of St. Romanus the abbot, written by an anonymous Burgundian monk, includes this reference to Hilary of Arles:

Hilary, through the support of the prefect... had expelled Celidonius from his episcopal see without any reason. Therefore, before the most blessed Leo, Pope of Rome, [Hilary] was convicted of having acted badly, and was duly

rebuked by apostolic authority, while Celidonius was restored to the episcopate. An epistle in due form is extant from that venerable pope to the bishops of Gaul, in which he restores the original privilege of metropolitans throughout Gaul, suppressing Hilary's excess... [A.S. 5:742]

A *Life* of St. Hilary, ascribed to the early sixth century, presents him in a more favorable light. According to this source, St. Hilary had been joined by St. Germanus, bishop of Auxerre, on a sort of visitation to various cities of Gaul. Various nobles and other citizens accused Celidonius of having been the husband of a widow, and of having passed a death sentence in an earlier career as a secular magistrate. For a bishop, the *Life* points out, such actions were prohibited by "the Apostolic See's authority and the statutes of the canons." When Celidonius appealed to Rome, St. Hilary presented his own side of the case with all due reverence and reason, and having lost the case, accepted the results with humility, sending various priests, including Ravennius, Hilary's successor in the see of Arles, to placate Pope Leo. [PL 50: 1236-8]

The Pope and Africa

Pope Leo wrote in August 446 to the bishops of Caesarea Mauretaniensis. His main concern was with reports of illicit ordinations filed by a certain Bishop Potentius, who had been given the mission of investigating the irregular episcopal elections in Africa. Invoking the care he owed the Universal Church "by divine institution," Leo reminded the African bishops of canon law on ordinations, which had been violated principally in two ways: men who had been twice married, or who had married a widow had been made bishops, and laymen had been directly promoted to the episcopate. In the latter cases, Pope Leo was willing to allow the new bishops to remain in their office, but not in the former. The pope wrote that his decision was given "without prejudice to the statutes of the Apostolic See." [PL 54: 645-52]

Leo also decided the case of Donatus of Salica, a Novatian bishop who converted to Catholicism along with his flock. Donatus could remain

a bishop, as long as he sent a profession of faith to Rome, abjuring his former error. The same decision applied to Maximus, a convert from Donatism who had been promoted to the episcopate from the lay state. [PL 54: 653]

Two bishops, Aggar and Tyberianus, had been involved in violently contested elections. Leo wrote, “we commit everything to your judgment, so that having received the report about the examination, we may know what to decide concerning them.” The pope also asked that bishops not be multiplied in obscure places, or places where priests might suffice, for that would show disrespect for the high priesthood. [PL 54: 655]

If any other cases arose about the state of the Church and disagreements between bishops, the pope requested a full report, “so that what has been justly and reasonably defined in accordance with ecclesiastical custom may be confirmed by our sentence as well.” [PL 54: 656]

In Spain, the Menace of Priscillianism

Turribius, bishop of Astorga in Galicia, had sent a report that the Priscillian heresy was reviving in Spain. The pope responded in July 447. Praising Turribius for his zeal, Leo gave a lengthy catalogue of Priscillianist errors. Priscillians, he noted, did not believe in the Trinity: they professed that Jesus is the only-begotten Son only because He alone was born of the Virgin. They also asserted that the soul of man is of the divine substance, and like Manicheans, they fasted on Christmas and Sundays. [PL 54: 678 sq.]

Leo announced that he had written to the bishops of Tarragon, Carthagera, Lusitania and Galicia; Turribius was responsible for passing on this authoritative ordinance to bishops of those provinces. If the bishops were unable to hold a general council of the Spanish bishops, the bishops of Galicia at least should have a council. [PL 54: 692]

The Pope and Sicily

In October 447, Leo wrote another decretal letter to the bishops of

Sicily on the proper administration of baptism. Both divine precepts and apostolic warnings, he declared, compelled him to watch over the state of all the churches with the utmost diligence, so as to suppress any blameworthy practices:

Inasmuch as the command of the Lord's voice remains, by which the most blessed apostle Peter is imbued with the threefold mystical sanction, that whoever loves Christ must feed His sheep, we are compelled by the reverence due to his see, over which we preside by the abundance of divine grace, to avoid the danger of slothfulness, lest the Supreme Apostle's profession that he loved the Lord be absent in us, for one who negligently feeds the flock entrusted to him so many times is convicted of failing to love the Supreme Shepherd... [PL 54: 695-6]

The bishops of Sicily were conferring baptism on the feast of the Epiphany, instead of the traditional day of Easter. This error would have been avoided, Pope Leo wrote, "if you received the law of all your observance whence you receive the consecration of your office: and the see of Blessed Peter the apostle, which is the mother of your priestly dignity, were also the mother of your ecclesiastical practice." [PL 54: 696]

Easter and Pentecost, the pope wrote, were the proper days for conferring baptism, although in case of necessity baptism must be administered anytime. He enjoined these rules on the bishops, so that they might never again depart from the apostolic institutions, for future violations of apostolic rules could not go unpunished. [PL 54: 696-702]

Leo reminded the bishops of the yearly council at Rome, because it is easier to avoid errors and scandals if, before the most blessed apostle Peter, there is a common discussion, "so that all his constitutions and canonical decrees continue inviolate among all the bishops of the Lord." Leo sent his letter through his fellow bishops Baccillus and Paschasius, "so that through their reports we may learn how reverently the institutions of the Apostolic See are observed by you." [PL 54: 702-4]

On the same day, Leo wrote to the Sicilian bishops about an abuse in two provinces. The bishops of Tauromenium and Palermo had alienated church properties, causing considerable hardship to the Tauromenian clergy. Presiding over a synod, Pope Leo, who had received complaints from clergy of both dioceses, prohibited this abuse by a perpetual constitution. In the future, bishops could not transfer church property except after discussion with all the clergy and their consent. Clergy who connived at harm to the church were to be deprived of their rank and communion. [PL 54: 703-6]

Leo also wrote to Januarius, bishop of Aquileia, directing that clergy who became mixed up in heretical communion, and later returned to the Church, should remain in their rank without hope of promotion. He directed Januarius to make sure that these salutary instructions were obeyed quickly and with circumspection. [PL 54: 707-9]

In March 448, Pope Leo wrote to Dorus, bishop of Benevento, surprised that Dorus, who should have been the most observant of the Apostolic See's authoritative decrees, was so negligent, or worse, transgressed instead of observing the laws handed down to him. The pope's language makes Mgr. Batiffol, a Catholic historian, surmise that Dorus had been taken from the Roman clergy. [PL 54: 709-14. SA, 448-9]

The Vicariate at Arles, Again?

When Hilary of Arles died in 449, the priest Ravennius was elected as the new bishop. Pope Leo wrote back to the bishops of Gaul on August 22, 449. Delighted at the promotion of Ravennius, Leo congratulated the bishops and confirmed their choice. [PL 54: 814-15]

On the same day, Leo sent a letter of congratulations to the new metropolitan of Arles, urging Ravennius to govern with meekness and authority and asking him to send in regular reports to Rome. Leo added that a certain Petronianus had been wandering about, presenting himself as a deacon of Rome. The pope asked that Ravennius make sure that Petronianus was expelled from the communion of all the churches. [PL 54: 815-18]

In early 450, the bishops of the province of Arles submitted a request to Pope Leo, which begins:

Mindful of the degree of honor and reverence that was ever due, and is always due to the most blessed Apostolic See, over which our Lord Jesus Christ, out of consideration for the merits of your holiness, willed that you preside, we were careful to signify promptly by letter to Your Apostleship the ordination by which our holy brother and fellow bishop Ravennius, in the city of Arles, after the passing of Bishop Hilary of blessed memory, was raised to the supreme pontificate, by the Lord's favor, through the concordant votes of all... [*Inter epp. S. Leonis*, 65. PL 54:881]

Claiming that they were not requesting the establishment of any new laws but the restoration of ancient customs, the bishops presented their petition. It is known to all the regions of Gaul, they declared, "and to the sacrosanct Roman Church," that the city of Arles had as her first bishop Trophimus, who had been sent by the apostle Peter. From that city the benefits of religion had gradually spread throughout Gaul, the bishops claimed, adding:

The predecessors of Your Beatitude, following the ancient tradition about the privileges of the Church of Arles, confirmed them by authoritative letters, as the archives of the Apostolic See undoubtedly contain, considering it utterly reasonable and just that *just as, through Peter, the most blessed prince of the apostles, the sacrosanct Roman Church would hold the principality over all the Churches of the entire world*, so also within Gaul the Church of Arles, which merited to have Saint Trophimus as her bishop sent by the apostles, should claim the pontifical right of ordaining... [PL 54:881]

The bishops reminded Leo of the secular magnificence of Arles, which emperors had proclaimed the "Mother of all of Gaul." Just as the Church of Arles possessed the primacy of the priesthood by ancient right,

they reasoned, she also held the secular primacy. Out of consideration for Saint Trophimus, they contended, the bishop of Arles had authority to govern all of Gaul by virtue of holding the place of the Apostolic See, “as the authority of your holy predecessors also attests.” The bishops continued:

All these things having been intimated, and brought to the knowledge of Your Beatitude by a faithful assertion, we beseech and implore the crown of Your Holiness by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ... and by the most blessed apostle Peter... that the authority of Your Beatitude, to remain in perpetuity, command that whatever the Church of Arles either received from antiquity, as we indicated above, or claimed by the authority of the Apostolic See, be restored in full to the bishop of that church... [PL 54: 883]

The bishops were asking the Apostolic See to take the rights of other metropolitans— notably the bishop of Vienne— and hand them to Arles. In other words, Leo was being asked to authorize a return to the bad old days of the vicariate at Arles under Patroclus and Pope Zosimus.

Pope Leo, who not surprisingly had been alerted by the bishop of Vienne, replied on May 5, 450. The Church of Vienne, Leo decided, should retain her right over Valence, Tarantaise, Geneva and Grenoble; the rest of the churches within the province were entrusted to Arles. [PL 54: 883–6]

In summer 451, Leo wrote again to Ravennius of Arles. A particularly important mystery of our religion, the pope declared, is that there be no diversity throughout the world about the date for celebrating Easter. To avoid any discrepancy, Leo announced the Easter date to Ravennius, directing that Ravennius, in turn, indicate the date to everybody. [PL 54: 945]

Consultations from Italy and Gaul

Writing to Theodore, bishop of Frioul, the pope addressed questions about penance and sacramental confession. First, however, Leo explained that the proper order of inquiry for Theodore was to consult his metropolitan,

because in matters of general observance “no inquiry should be made without the primates.” [PL 54: 1011]

The manifold mercy of God, the pope added, forgives human falls not only by the grace of baptism, but also by the medicine of penance; the mediator of God and men, Christ Jesus, gave authority to the bishops to impose acts of penance for sin, and when the faithful have made due satisfaction, readmit them to the communion of the sacraments through the door of reconciliation. Such reconciliation, the pope continued, must be granted particularly to the faithful near death, and those who showed signs of repentance but were unable to ask for this reconciliation in words. The pope asked Theodore to inform his metropolitan of the letter, so that it might benefit anybody who had any questions on this subject. [PL 54: 1011-14]

On March 21, 458, Pope Leo answered a consultation of Bishop Nicetas of Aquileia. A number of men had been taken prisoner in wartime, and their wives had taken other husbands. The women must return to their first husbands or face excommunication, Leo declared. [Ep. 159. PL 54: 1137]

Some of the captives, out of hunger or fear, had eaten foods sacrificed to idols. Such individuals must be cleansed by penitential satisfaction, Leo added. Others had submitted to rebaptism through error or fear; Leo decreed that they were to be received through the imposition of hands by the bishop, and penance, although the elderly or seriously ill could receive a milder sentence and be restored to communion by the priests. Those who had been baptized by heretics, but otherwise were properly disposed, were to receive confirmation through the imposition of hands and invocation of the Holy Spirit. [PL 54: 1135-40]

On October 24, 458, the pope answered a consultation from the bishop of Ravenna. Children returning from captivity, who could not remember whether they had been baptized or not, must receive a certainly valid baptism, Leo explained. Those who had been validly baptized by heretics were to receive the Holy Spirit through the imposition of hands. [PL 54:

1191–6]

In 458 or 459, Leo answered a lengthy series of questions from Rusticus, bishop of Narbonne. The pope reaffirmed traditional principles about canonical elections of bishops, clerical continence, the types and conditions of public penance, the necessity for a certainly valid baptism, the reception of those baptized by heretics through confirmation, and so on. [PL 54: 1197 sq.]

On March 6, 459, Leo wrote to the bishops of Campania, Samnium and Picenum. Baptismal regeneration, he explained, was only to be conferred at Easter and Pentecost, barring cases of serious illness. The pope also made it clear that private confession of sins to a priest is sufficient for absolution. [PL 54: 1209–11]

Pope Leo is venerated as a saint by the Latin and Byzantine churches. The orthodox eastern church, whose tradition venerates his dogmatic tome as a “pillar of orthodoxy,” commemorates St. Leo on February 18, eulogizing him in these terms:

You have acted as heir of the throne of Peter, the Coryphaeus... having his mind and... zeal for the faith... as the dawn... O thrice blessed one, you sent your tome of pious dogmas as rays of light to the Church... The successor of Peter, enriched with his presidency and possessed of the grace of his zeal, composes his tome, divinely moved... you wrote the teachings of religion as on tablets divinely engraved, appearing as a second Moses to the people and assembly of venerable teachers, shouting: “O priests, bless Christ; o people, exalt him forever.” [*Menaion*, Athens 1966–1980, February, 100–102]

Pope St. Hilary I [461–468]

Pope Leo the Great was followed by the deacon Hilary, who had uttered the protest *Contradicatur!* at the Robber Council. On January 25,

462 Pope Hilary announced his election by letter to Leontius, bishop of Arles, who replied:

...the son rejoices in the mother's honor, and since the Roman Church is the mother of all, it behooved us to rejoice that in such a great consternation of affairs and infirmity of the age, [the Lord] should have raised you over her, "that you might rule the peoples in equity, and guide the nations on earth." [Thiel, 137-8]

Later that year, Hilary wrote back to Leontius but this time, the pope's mood was less positive. A certain Hermes, in what the pope called a "most iniquitous usurpation," had assumed the see of Narbonne. Rusticus, metropolitan of Narbonne, had consecrated Hermes—who apparently was his own archdeacon [St. Leo, Ep. 167, 1]—as bishop of Beziers, but the city was unwilling to accept the new bishop. Had Rusticus named his own successor? If so, it was a serious violation of canon law. Pope Hilary reprimanded Leontius for having been "so unmindful of Catholic law" as not to have informed Rome of these events. [Thiel, 140-41]

Pope Hilary held a synod and wrote to various provinces of Gaul, notifying the bishops of his decisions. Hermes was allowed to remain as bishop of Narbonne, but the right of ordaining was taken away from him and temporarily transferred to the dean of the province. Narbonne would recover her rights as a metropolitan see after the death of Hermes. Councils were to be called each year by Leontius, bishop of Arles, and bishops were not to proceed to other provinces without letters from their metropolitan. Finally, the pope reminded the bishops: "in resolving the weightier cases which cannot be settled over there, let the sentence of the Apostolic See be consulted." [Thiel, 141 sq.]

On October 10, 463, Pope Hilary complained again to Leontius, who had failed to inform the pope of abuses by Mamertus, bishop of Vienne, who had consecrated the bishop of Die over the objections of the people. [Ep. 9. Thiel, 146-7]

Keys Over the Christian World

In February 464, Pope Hilary wrote to the bishops of a synod in Gaul, which was considering the case of Mamertus:

...it has also been laid down in law by Christian princes that whatever the bishop of the Apostolic See pronounced in his examination, for the removal of confusion, unto the churches and their rulers, they ought to accept with veneration and observe with tenacity along with their people, as Your Charity should know... [Ep. 9. Thiel, 146-7]

Because Mamertus had violated the metropolitan rights of Leontius of Arles, Pope Hilary decreed that the new bishop of Die should be confirmed by Leontius. Further, unless Mamertus promised to respect the rights of Arles as the metropolitan see, Pope Hilary threatened to deprive him of jurisdiction over four dioceses that had been delegated to him by the Apostolic See. [Ep. 10. Thiel, 148-51; cf. Ep. 9, Thiel 147]

In 463 or 464, Pope Hilary received a letter from the bishops of the Spanish province of Tarraconensis, which begins:

Even if there were no necessity of ecclesiastical discipline, it behooved us to seek out the privilege of your see by which, after having received the keys of the kingdom throughout the world after the Savior's resurrection, the singular preaching of the most blessed Peter looked to the enlightenment of all— the principality of whose vicar, in proportion to its eminence, must be revered and loved by all. [Thiel, 155]

The bishops complained to the pope that Silvanus, bishop of Calagura, was performing illegal ordinations, "ignoring the rules of the fathers and despising your institutions." Not only had Silvanus ordained a bishop in one diocese where the people had not asked for one, he had even ordained a priest of Zaragossa to the episcopate! "We beseech your see," the bishops continued, "that in apostolic terms we may be instructed of what you would have us observe in this matter... it will undoubtedly be your triumph, if,

within the lifetime of Your Apostleship, the Catholic Church listen to what is maintained by the chair of St. Peter..." [Thiel, 156-7]

In another letter, the bishops petitioned the "apostolic pope" on behalf of Nundinarius, bishop of Barcelona, who wished to name a certain Irenaeus as his own successor. The provincial council had approved this wish, but wanted Pope Hilary to confirm the measures taken. [Thiel, 157 sq.]

The pope replied on October 30, 465, defending traditional canon law regarding ordinations: the rights of metropolitans had to be respected; without their consent nobody could lawfully be ordained a bishop. As for priests irregularly consecrated by Silvanus, Pope Hilary was willing to bend the rules and confirm them by his own authority, provided that they were suitable in other respects. The pope, however, was unwilling to tolerate the custom of a bishop naming his own successor, as if the priesthood were a hereditary fiefdom. Irenaeus had to leave, and a new bishop had to be elected at Barcelona and consecrated by the metropolitan. [Ep. 16. Thiel, 165-9]

Pope St. Simplicius [468-483]

Pope Simplicius had been informed that Gaudentius, bishop of Ausinum or the modern Osenia, had abused his authority by performing illicit ordinations, "against the statutes of the canons and our precepts." The pope wrote a letter depriving Gaudentius of the right of ordaining, transferring it to another bishop. [Thiel 175-177]

John, metropolitan of Ravenna, had ordained a certain Gregory as bishop of Modena, against Gregory's will. Pope Simplicius reprimanded John, threatening to deprive him of the right of ordaining if John committed such an abuse again. [Thiel 201-2]

Pope Simplicius appointed Zeno, bishop of Seville, as papal vicar with this mandate: "...we have seen fit to strengthen you *with the vicarious authority of our see*: armed with this power, you must not in any way allow the decrees of apostolic institution, or the landmarks of the holy Fathers to be overstepped." [Thiel, 213-14]

An early medieval biography presents St. Eleutherius, bishop of Tournai, as a wonderworker during this period whose ancestors were converted by St. Piatius, a confessor during the persecution of Diocletian. When the bishop of Tournai died [c. 487], the faithful, noticing the holiness of Eleutherius, “sent him to Rome, and as he returned consecrated him bishop, with the Pope’s authority.” A second, longer *Life* depicts the saint as a firm opponent of all heresies who worked closely with the popes of the late fifth and early sixth centuries, until his death in 531. [A.S. 5: 187 sq.]

St. Gelasius I [492-496]

On March 11, 494, Pope Gelasius wrote to the bishops of Lucania and Sicily. After laying down various regulations for the clergy and religious, the pope continued:

...it is unworthy for any bishop or lesser order to refuse this observance, which it sees that the see of Blessed Peter both follows and teaches, and it is fitting enough that the whole body of the Church agree in this observance, which it sees in force where the Lord placed the principality of the entire Church. [Thiel, 360 sq.]

The pope also laid down certain constitutions which bishops had to accept at their ordination. [Thiel, 379-80]

The *Life* of St. Lawrence, bishop of Siponto, records that when he was elected bishop [c. 492], a delegation of the aristocracy, “moved by a divine instinct,” approached the “most holy pope,” St. Gelasius, so that “the holy man would grant their bishop the fulness of the pontificate through anointing with chrism,” in accordance with the usage of the holy Roman Church.” In the Old Testament, the *Life* continues, Aaron was consecrated by Moses, who bore the image of the “supreme Roman Pontiff, so that from the Roman Pontiff all bishops throughout the world would be anointed with holy chrism.” [A.S. 4: 58]

Pope St. Symmachus [498-514]

In 506 Caesarius, bishop of Arles, presided at the Council of Agde, canon 9 of which prescribed continence for married clergy, citing the authority of Popes Innocent [401-417] and Siricius [384-399]. [PL 84: 265]

On November 6, 513, Pope Symmachus confirmed the division of provinces between Vienne and Arles established by Pope Leo. The pope's letter to the bishops of Gaul begins:

The praiseworthy institutes of the Apostolic See urge us to provide with highly vigilant care for the concord of the Universal Church which is spread throughout the whole world... [Thiel, 722]

The pope granted the use of the pallium to Caesarius of Arles, who had professed to him in writing:

As the episcopate received its origin from the person of Blessed Peter the Apostle, thus it is necessary that Your Holiness, with appropriate disciplines, clearly show each of the churches what they must observe... [Thiel, 727]

A letter of Pope Symmachus dated January 11, 514, reveals another *libellus* that St. Caesarius had offered the pope:

Insofar as the Apostolic See reserves for itself the primacy [over] all pontiffs of the churches which are spread out all over the world, and its greater authority shines forth in synodical decrees, it follows that what it has long ago granted by provision of its authority should be preserved untrammelled. To this effect the Church of Arles is to enjoy its privileges, and the authority that Church has had up to now, it asks that you confirm by your authority... [Thiel, 729]

About this time King Sigismund asked Pope Symmachus for some relics, acknowledging him as “bishop of the universal church,” while Ennodius, writing to Pope Symmachus, remarked, “you rule the summit of the heavenly empire...” [Thiel: 730, 733]

In April 521, Pope Hormisdas made Sallust, bishop of Seville, his vicar for the Spanish provinces of Baetica and Lusitania. Sallust had to watch over the general observance of the canons, and convoke the bishops in synod if necessary. The pope wrote:

Supported as you are by so many merits of pious solicitude and labor, we are pleased to enjoin on you such duties as pertain to the care of our office, so that in such far flung provinces you may both represent our person and care for observance of the rules of the Fathers. By the present authority, we commit to you our place throughout the provinces of Baetica and Lusitania, without prejudice to the privileges which antiquity has decreed in favor of metropolitan bishops... [Thiel, 980]

Meanwhile Caesarius of Arles, concerned at a revival of semi-Pelagianism, convoked the Second Council of Orange in 529. St. Caesarius submitted the decrees of the council to Pope Felix IV, who had been succeeded by Boniface II [530-532]. In his reply, Boniface confirmed the decrees of the council by authority of the Apostolic See, as Caesarius had requested. [Mansi 8: 711-29, 735-7]

The *Life* of St. Caesarius, written by some disciples of his who had become bishops, notes that Pope Symmachus had promoted him to the rank of metropolitan and given him the pallium. The authors add with satisfaction that when the saint's doctrine on grace was called into question, Boniface, “Pope of the Roman Church,” approved it “by apostolic authority.” [PL 67: 1016, 1023]

John II [533-535]

John II intervened in Gaul about the case of Contumeliosus, bishop

of Riez, who had been convicted of “many shameful and dishonorable acts,” apparently including adultery. The pope decreed that Contumeliosus was to be deposed and sent to a monastery to do penance, entrusting Caesarius of Arles with the diocese of Riez until a new bishop could be appointed. The pope announced the decisions in letters to the bishops of Gaul, the clergy and faithful of Riez, and Caesarius. [Mansi 8: 807-9. Cf. Hefele 4: 181-4]

Pope St. Agapetus [535-536]

In 534, Justinian sent the general Belisarius, along with a fleet of 600 ships and over 30,000 men, to liberate Africa from Vandal oppression. In 535, the African bishops held a great council at Carthage—the first such council in a hundred years. Among other questions, the bishops had to decide whether converted Arian priests could function as clergy, and whether children baptized by Arians could be admitted as clerics. The Africans were also anxious to end abuses of clergy who arbitrarily left their dioceses and went overseas [to Italy] without appropriate canonical letters. [Hefele 4: 188-9]

The African bishops had sent a letter of synodical consultation to Pope John II, praising him as a worthy occupant of “the holy See of Peter,” and “honoring the authority and grace of Your Beatitude with due obeisance.” When the letter reached Rome, however, the pope was dead; it was answered by his successor. [Mansi 8: 808-9]

In his response, Pope Agapetus congratulated the Africans on their deliverance from heretical persecutions, and praised them for having remembered the “apostolic principality,” and addressing their doubts to the see which had the power to give authoritative solutions. Converted Arians, the pope declared, were not to be allowed to function as clergy; Agapetus also agreed with the Africans on the issue of clergy traveling overseas without canonical letters. He wrote to Reparatus, bishop of Carthage, urging him to make these decisions known all over Africa, “lest anybody say that he can have an excuse to be ignorant of what the principality of the Apostolic See has written out of consideration for the canons.” [Mansi 8: 848-50. Cf. Hefele

4: 189]

Agapetus also wrote to Justinian. Forwarding the canons prohibiting the promotion of converted Arian clergy, he asked Justinian how it could be permissible “to infringe such clear and synodal constitutions of the Apostolic See.” The pope reminded Justinian of the incident when Blessed Peter, “doorkeeper of the heavenly kingdom,” had shown excessive deference to the Judaizers, and was rebuked by St. Paul [Gal. 2, 11]. In other words, the pope had to uphold the rigor of ecclesiastical law, at least in this matter. [Mansi 8: 850–2]

In the same letter, the pope mentioned two cases of bishops which had caused disputes, recalling, with regard to the first case, how Justinian had wanted everything to be “reserved to the principality of Blessed Peter.” There had also been a proposal of establishing a papal vicariate in Justiniana Prima, a city near the emperor’s birthplace. The pope promised Justinian to address the issues through legates, “preserving the principality of Blessed Peter, which you love.” [Mansi 8: 852–3]

The pope also received an appeal from Contumeliosus of Riez, who had been deposed by John II. Agapetus informed his vicar, Caesarius of Arles, that Contumeliosus could receive support from church property but remained suspended from celebration of the mass and administration of the church’s patrimony, pending a fresh investigation of the case. [Ep. 7. PL 66: 46–48]

Pope Vigilius and the Vicariate at Arles

Pope Vigilius [537–555] elected to continue the vicariate at Arles. On March 6, 538, Vigilius answered a consultation from Caesarius about the case of King Theodebert. The king had married the wife of his deceased brother. Vigilius left it to the judgment of Caesarius to determine the appropriate penance for this illicit union. [Mansi 9: 34–5]

The editors in Mansi note that the consultation of Caesarius had been addressed to Pope Silverius. St. Silverius, however, had been sent into exile in

537... with probable collusion on the part of Vigilius! Only when Silverius died, later that year, did Vigilius become an unquestionably valid pope.

Pope Vigilius continued the vicariate under the next bishop of Arles, Auxanius. Congratulating Auxanius for having been consecrated “in accordance with the canons and the rules of our predecessors,” Vigilius granted him the use of the pallium, and advised:

If you will imitate those good things which your predecessor received from the Apostolic See, out of the foundation of the Rock of the Lord’s doctrine, [and] fulfilled in his acts, and will not deviate in any way from the constitutions of the Apostolic See— as it is written, you shall undoubtedly receive a crown which God grants to those who love Him. [Mansi 9: 40]

Pope Vigilius added more instructions in another letter to Auxanius. Ordinarily Auxanius was to resolve disputes between bishops by holding a synod, examining the case, and resolving it in accordance with previous papal instructions. Cases of great importance, especially questions of faith, had to be referred to the Apostolic See to be settled there. Vigilius announced that he had informed all the bishops under Auxanius of these decisions, adding that bishops were not to journey into distant regions without canonical letters of recommendation from Auxanius. Again Vigilius granted Auxanius the use of the pallium, “by the holy authority of Blessed Peter.” [Mansi 9: 41–2]

After the death of Auxanius, Pope Vigilius entrusted the office of vicar to the new bishop of Arles, Aurelian. Pope Vigilius gave Aurelian essentially the same authority he had given to Auxanius, and wrote to the bishops urging them to show due obedience to Aurelian. [Mansi 9: 46–8]

Pope Vigilius also wrote a decretal to Profuturus, bishop of Braga, the genuine version of which exists in the *Hispana*, or Spanish collection of canons. Praising Profuturus for having requested “a rule of the Catholic faith...founded in the Apostolic See,” the pope gave in return an “authoritative

reply (*auctoritas*) of the Apostolic See.”The letter, which urges Profuturus to refer any future questions to Rome, gives extensive directions about the Priscillian heresy, and proper baptismal and liturgical practice. [PL 84: 830 sq.]

Pelagius I [556-560]

Pope Pelagius I [556-560] continued the vicariate at Arles. Conceding the use of the pallium to Sapaudus, bishop of Arles, he wrote:

Throughout all Gaul, we enjoin on you the place of the holy Apostolic See, over which we preside, by divine grace. For the memory of antiquity teaches, and the records at Rome also attest that this [office] was granted to your predecessors by my predecessors and by the holy Fathers, so that the perpetual stability of that stable rock, upon which the Lord our Savior founded the Church... should firmly lay hold of the summit of [his] primacy by the authority of his successors, either by themselves or through vicars... Therefore it is that we enjoin such cares upon your fraternity, so that, having been established as vicar of our see, in our likeness you may hold the place of first bishop throughout Gaul, and dispense whatever must be done for the government or arrangement of the ecclesiastical state, observing the rules of the Fathers and the constitutions of the Apostolic See... [PL 69: 405]

Pope Pelagius also wrote to King Childebert of Paris [511-558], notifying him of this measure and urging him to do everything possible to secure that the vicar's authority be respected. Later on, when Sapaudus was compelled to undergo judgment before the tribunal of another bishop, the pope protested in another letter, reminding the king that Sapaudus had been honored with “the privilege of the primacy and the place of the Apostolic See” throughout Gaul. [PL 69: 406-7]

As late as 613, Pope Boniface IV, at the request of King Theodericus

II, sent the pallium to Florianus, bishop of Arles, along with lengthy instructions to use it “as our predecessors granted it to your predecessors.” [MGH, *Epistolae* 3: 453 sq.]

Merovingian councils occasionally cite decrees of the Apostolic See. Canon 3 of the Council of Orleans, in 538, decrees that a metropolitan must be chosen by his fellow provincial bishops, “as the decrees of the Apostolic See contain... for it is fair, as the Apostolic See itself says: ‘He who is in charge of all should be chosen by all.’” [F. Maassen, *Concilia Aevi Merovingici*, Hanover 1883, 73–4]

About 540, Leo, bishop of Sens, was faced with a plan to mutilate his diocese with the establishment of a bishopric at Melun. Leo threatened to excommunicate anybody who participated in the proceeding, unless the pope were informed or the dispute were submitted to a “synodal hearing.” [MGH, *Epistolae* 3: 438]

Canon 1 of the Council of Orleans, in 541, decrees that in case of doubt about the Easter date, metropolitans should make inquiries and adhere to constitutions of the Apostolic See. [Maassen, *Concilia Aevi Merovingici*, 87]

Canon 21 of the Council of Tours, in 567, cites “the sentence of Pope Innocent [401–417] given to Victricius, bishop of Rouen,” and “Roman law” on consecrated virgins, and asks, “What priest would presume to act against the decretals which have come from the Apostolic See...?” The council professes to follow “what both the apostle Paul and Pope Innocent laid down.” [Maassen, *Concilia Aevi Merovingici*, 128–9]

St. Gregory of Tours mentions two bishops, Salonius of Embrun and Sagittarius of Gap, who had been deposed in a council for such crimes as murder and adultery. They went to Rome, appealed to Pope John III, and convinced him to restore them; John III wrote to King Guntram of Burgundy, calling on him to return the two bishops to their sees. Later on, the same bishops were condemned for treason at a Council of Chalons-sur-Saone, in 579. [*Hist. Franc.* V: 21, 28. PL 71: 340–46. Cf. Hefele 4: 387, 402]

Another Merovingian era appeal occurs in the *Life* of St. Emmeramus [c. 650], a missionary in Bavaria who came from Poitiers. Accused of fathering an illegitimate child, the saint replied, “I promised to go to Rome, there humbly to seek the threshold of Peter, prince of the apostles, whose Church is known to have been founded by evangelical authority.” St. Emmeramus appealed to “the apostolic and most holy man, who by God’s authorship has succeeded in the office of Peter and holds the primacy... Send any prudent man along with me, so that sentence may be given about this matter before so great a pontiff, and that there I may be judged according to rules, lest I appear guilty of this crime...” [A.S. 45: 477]

A Law for the West

Western collections of canons often cite papal decretals alongside the canons of ecumenical councils. About 500 the Scythian monk Dionysius Exiguus made a collection of decretals of the Roman Pontiffs, which contains dozens of decrees from the time of Pope Siricius [384–399] to the late fifth century. [PL 67: 231 sq.]

With his collection, Dionysius included an element previously unfamiliar to the west: the “Apostolic Canons.” Although the east generally accepted eighty-five “apostolic canons,” Dionysius translated fifty, entitling them: “*Ecclesiastical rules of the holy apostles, promulgated through Clement, pontiff of the Roman Church.*” [PL 67: 141 sq.]

A collection of ecclesiastical canons and constitutions of the Apostolic See, sometimes called the *Quesneliana*, appears with the works of Leo the Great. [PL 56: 359 sq.]

About 530 Fulgentius Ferrandus, a deacon of Carthage, published a very brief collection of canons, which cites Sardican canons on appeals to Rome, and a decretal of Pope Siricius [384–399], which was read at an African council. [PL 67: 949 sq.]

The *Hispana*, or Spanish collection of canons, is a compilation of councils up to the eighth century. The preface notes that the collection

includes ecumenical councils, Latin and Greek councils, and “decrees of the Roman bishops, which because of the height of the Apostolic See have an authority not inferior to that of councils.” The writer also has a word of caution about the “canons of the apostles,” noting that “the Apostolic See does not receive them, nor did the holy Fathers consent to them.” [PL 84: 91]

The *Hispana* contains over a hundred decretal letters from popes Damasus [366–384] to Gregory the Great [590–604], including several dealing with eastern affairs, such as the formula of Pope Hormisdas. [PL 84: 627 sq.]

Canons of individual Spanish councils also refer to Roman decrees. At the First Council of Braga, in 561, the leading participant was Martin of Dumium, metropolitan of Braga, a monk who came originally from the eastern province of Pannonia, or modern Hungary.

The council gave considerable attention to the Priscillian heresy, noting that it was condemned long ago “by the see of the most blessed apostle Peter,” and by “the most blessed pope of the city of Rome, Leo, who was approximately the fortieth successor of the apostle Peter.” [PL 84: 562–3]

Canon 4 decrees “that masses be celebrated by all in the same order that Profuturus, former bishop of this metropolitan church, received it as it was written by the very authority of the Apostolic See.” [PL 84: 566]

Canon 5 decrees that nobody omit the ceremonies for conferring baptism which Profuturus received it “from the see of the most blessed apostle Peter.” [PL 84: 566]

Canons 4 and 5 are referring to the letter from Pope Vigilius [538–555] to Profuturus of Braga, which the council called an “authority of the Apostolic See,” and “an instruction of the Apostolic See, which was sent from the very chair of the most blessed Peter.” [PL 84: 566]

Keys Over the Christian World

The Third Council of Toledo, in 589, marked the conversion of Visigothic Spain to Catholicism. Canon 1 has a heading to note “that the statutes of the councils and decrees of the Roman bishops are to be observed.” The canon decrees, “Let the constitutions of all the councils, and at the same time, the synodical letters of the holy bishops of Rome, remain in force.” [PL 84: 351]

The Fourth Council of Toledo [633] addressed a controversy about baptism. Certain priests insisted on one immersion for baptism, because the Arians used a triple immersion. Canon 6 decrees, “let us be informed by the precepts of the Apostolic See, about what must be done,” and cites a letter of Pope Gregory I [590–604], “who not only enlightened the regions of Italy, but thoroughly instructed far flung churches with his doctrine.” Noting that either usage was valid, Gregory had favored the retention of the simple immersion, which was customary in Spain, lest the Arians exploit a return to the triple immersion for propaganda purposes. [PL 84: 367–8]

Canon 17 decrees that the Apocalypse must be received as canonical Scripture, “because the authority of many councils and the synodical decrees of the holy bishops of Rome prescribe that it is of John the Evangelist, and established that it must be received among the divine books.” [PL 84: 372]

The Eleventh Council of Toledo [675], canon 12, prescribes that penitents in danger of death must be given reconciliation, “in accordance with the edict of Pope Leo.” [PL 84: 464]

Chapter XIX

The Keys Exalted

After the death of Pope Pelagius II in early 590, the deacon Gregory, after an interval of several months, was raised to the pontificate. Gregory, who came from a patrician Roman family, was a descendant of Popes Felix III [483–492] and Agapetus I [535–536]. Gregory had been a Benedictine monk when Pope Pelagius had raised him to the diaconate, and sent him to act as the papal *apocrisiarius* or representative in Constantinople.

For Pope Gregory, St. Peter is “prince of the apostles”; to approach the Roman Church is tantamount to approaching Peter. In a letter to the bishop of Corinth, Gregory speaks of having reached “the summit of the Apostolic See.” [PL 77: 480, *passim*]

In another letter, Pope Gregory proclaims that the Apostolic See is “head of all the churches.” [Epp. XIII, 45. PL 77, 1298]

Gregory has a similar remark about the primate of Byzacena in Africa: “As to what he says about being subject to the Apostolic See: if any fault be found in the bishops, I know not what bishop is *not* subject to it.” [Epp. IX, 59. PL 77, 996]

Pope Gregory affirmed that the Church of Constantinople was subject to the Apostolic See, writing:

For with regard to what they say about the Church of Constantinople, who doubts that it is subject to the Apostolic See? The most pious lord, the emperor, and our brother, the bishop of the same city, also profess this assiduously. [Epp. IX, 12. PL 77, 957–8]

Archbishop John of Ravenna, who claimed certain privileges for his own church, writing to Pope Gregory, speaks of “that most holy see which transmits its rights to the universal Church.” [Epp. III, 57. PL 77, 654]

When Lawrence, bishop of Milan, died and the deacon Constantius was elected as the new bishop, Pope Gregory was not satisfied with the unsigned reports submitted to Rome. Noting that “the apostolic see, by God’s design, is evidently in charge of all the churches,” he instructed the subdeacon John to verify the election results. If the reported results were accurate, Pope Gregory continued, Constantius was to be consecrated by his own suffragan bishops, “as the ancient custom requires, with the assent of our authority... so that, with the retention of this custom, the Apostolic See may both retain its own place, and not diminish the rights it has granted to others.” [Epp. III, 30. PL 77, 627-8]

Pope Gregory was a firm defender of the unity of the Church. Frequently in his letters he urged the Istrians—who had created a schism on the pretext that Pope Vigilius and the fifth ecumenical council had changed the faith—to return to unity. In another instance, Gregory received this oath from a bishop who had returned from schism:

...having discovered the snare of division by which I was held, I was led humbly and of my own free will by divine grace to return to the unity of the Apostolic See. And lest I be suspected of returning insincerely, or in deceit, I swear under penalty of loss of my rank, and under the bond of anathema, and promise to you, and through you to Blessed Peter, prince of the apostles, and to his vicar, the most blessed Gregory and his successors, that never, through anybody’s persuasion or in any other way, will I return to schism, from which I have been delivered through the mercy of our redeemer, but shall always remain entirely in the unity of the holy catholic church and the communion of the Roman pontiff... [Epp. X, 31, old recension, Mansi 10: 326]

A Vigorous Protest

When John the Faster, patriarch of Constantinople, assumed the title of ‘ecumenical patriarch,’ Gregory—unlike many writers, who consider it as equivalent to “imperial patriarch”—understood it quite literally to mean “universal bishop.” Outraged by the title, Gregory wrote a strong letter of protest to John.

In the first place, Gregory described how his predecessor, Pelagius II, had noticed the title while reviewing the acts of a synod of Constantinople. Appalled by the title, Pelagius had nullified the acts of the synod and prohibited his representative in Constantinople from assisting at the patriarchal liturgy. The rash presumption of using this title, Gregory continued, was disturbing the peace of the universal Church. To Gregory’s mind, the pride that had inspired this title—“universal bishop”—was reminiscent of that of Lucifer himself. The Council of Chalcedon had offered St. Leo the title of “Universal Pope,” but none of my predecessors, Gregory continued, had wanted to use such a title, lest they infringe the just honor due to their brother bishops. Reminding the patriarch of the humility of Christ, Gregory begged John to abstain from the spirit of pride. [Epp.V, 18. PL 77, 738-43]

Pope Gregory sent another letter to Emperor Maurice, which included this protest:

It is clear to everyone who knows the Gospel that by the voice of the Lord, the care of the universal Church was entrusted to the holy prince of all the apostles, Peter. To him it is said: “Peter, do you love me? Feed my sheep.” To him it is said: “Behold Satan has sought to sift you as wheat, and I have prayed for you, Peter, that your faith may not fail, and do you, when you have been converted, strengthen your brethren.” To him it is said: “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I shall build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I shall give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth

Keys Over the Christian World

shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

Behold, he received the keys of the kingdom of heaven, the power of binding and loosing is given to him, the care and principality of the entire Church are committed to him, and yet he is not called the universal apostle, and my most holy fellow priest John strives to be called universal bishop. I am compelled to exclaim and to say: *O the times! O the morals!*

Complaining that John had usurped a new name in contravention of the canons and evangelical statutes, Gregory reminded the emperor how many heretics and heresiarchs had come from the Church of Constantinople: Arius, Macedonius, and so on. The popes had been unwilling to use the title “universal pope,” found in the acts of the Council of Chalcedon, Gregory continued, complaining that John was causing scandal and doing injury to the holy universal Church. [Epp.V, 20. PL 77, 744-8]

Gregory wrote to patriarchs Anastasius of Antioch and Eulogius of Alexandria, urging them to suppress the title and counseling humility and peace. Pope Gregory reiterated that Pelagius II had quashed the acts of the synod of Constantinople, which contained the obnoxious title, “by the authority of the holy apostle Peter.” [PL 77, 771-4]

Pope Gregory was on cordial terms with these patriarchs. Eulogius had sent a letter that contained some fine expressions about the Chair of Peter. Pope Gregory, delighted, replied:

Your most sweet holiness has had much to say to me in your letters about the chair of St. Peter, prince of the apostles, saying that he sits to this very day in his successors... For who is unaware that the holy Church is strengthened in the solidity of the prince of the apostles, who drew his firmness of mind from his name, so that he should be called Peter from the rock?

Citing the petrine texts from the Gospels, Pope Gregory explained the reason for the authority of the three great sees: Rome, Alexandria, Antioch. Because these sees were all petrine sees, Gregory calls them “one see, and the see of one”:

Therefore, although there are many apostles, yet because of that very principality only the see of the prince of the apostles has waxed strong in authority, which in three places is of one. For he himself exalted that see [Rome] in which he deigned to rest and to end the present life. He graced the see [Alexandria] in which he sent [Mark] the evangelist, his disciple. He strengthened the see [Antioch] in which he sat for seven years, although he was destined to depart. [PL 77, 898–900]

Eulogius, possibly to mollify Gregory, had given him the title of “universal pope.” However Gregory, practicing what he preached, disclaimed the introduction of such a pompous title. [Epp.VIII, 30. PL 77, 933]

Eulogius, incidentally, was a zealous opponent of the monophysites. John Moschus relates that St. Leo, Pope of Rome, appeared three times to Theodore, former secretary of Eulogius who later became bishop of Darna. Announcing that the work of Eulogius was pleasing to Christ and to Peter, Coryphaeus of the apostles, St. Leo directed Theodore to thank Eulogius for having worthily explained the *Tòme* to Flavian, on the incarnation. [*Pratum Spirituale*, 148. PG 87, 3012–13]

Two Eastern Appeals, and a Redress of Grievances

Two priests, John of Chalcedon and Athanasius, a monk of Isauria, had been condemned for heresy by Patriarch John IV of Constantinople, and Athanasius had even been beaten with clubs in the patriarchal church! Queried by Pope Gregory about what had happened, the patriarch claimed to have no knowledge of the case. Gregory, who found this response disingenuous, declared that John must be a bad pastor if he was unaware of such injuries being perpetrated against God’s servants in his own back yard.

Alluding to John's legendary reputation for fasting and asceticism, Gregory pointed out that it would be better that meat go *into* his mouth than that untruthful words come *out of* it. Appalled at the beating of a priest in the patriarch's own church, Gregory reminded John: "We are pastors, not persecutors." [Epp. III, 53. PL 77, 647-50]

Gregory examined the case of John of Chalcedon in a council. After a bit of inquiry, it was clear that John had suffered a serious injustice. Although John had been accused of Marcionism, his accusers didn't even know what "Marcionism" was! Further, John had submitted a completely orthodox profession of faith. Gregory pronounced John innocent of heresy, announcing the decision to Patriarch John of Constantinople and to Emperor Maurice, urging them to stop the persecution of the priest. [Epp. VI, 15-16. PL 77, 807-9]

As for Athanasius of Isauria, a book full of heresy had been found in his possession; Patriarch John had forwarded the book. However, Athanasius, appealing to the Apostolic See, denied any heretical sentiments or intent, and offered an orthodox profession of faith, promising not to read the book any more. Given these assurances, Pope Gregory declared Athanasius to be Catholic and free of heresy, and gave the priest permission to return to his monastery. The pope also promised to send letters to this effect to the new bishop of Constantinople. [Epp. VI, 66. PL 77, 849-52]

Pope Gregory and the West: Appeals from Spain

Shortly before Gregory's election to the Apostolic See, King Reccared of the Visigoths had converted from Arianism to Catholicism. Gregory, overjoyed, received the good news from St. Leander, bishop of Seville. In 589 a great national council at Toledo, which declared that "the synodical letters of the holy bishops of Rome remain in force," gave directions for the Catholicizing of the kingdom. [Mansi IX, 992] Praising Leander's charity and edifying life, Pope Gregory sent him the pallium. [Epp. IX, 121. PL 77, 1052]

The pope also heard appeals from the Spanish provinces of

Carthagera and Baetica, which had been under Byzantine rule since the era of Justinian. A Byzantine official named Comitulus had deposed two bishops, Januarius of Malaga, and another prelate named Stephen. Pope Gregory received their appeal. When a bishop was accused by a layman, Gregory pointed out, the authorized judge was the metropolitan; the next highest court of appeal was the patriarch. If there *were* no metropolitan or patriarch, Gregory continued, the case fell within the jurisdiction of the Apostolic See, “head of all the churches.” The pope sent a “defensor” named John to investigate. John did as he was instructed, pointing out that he had been deputized by “my apostolic master, Pope Gregory.” John decided that Januarius had been unjustly deposed and should be restored, whereas the bishop who had intruded into Malaga should be deposed. Moving on to further papal business, John then investigated abuses among the monks of the island of Cabrera. [PL 77, 1294–1302]

The Papal Vicariate in Gaul

Granting a request of King Childebert of Austrasia, Gregory appointed Virgilius, bishop of Arles, as vicar in Gaul. “We have granted your desires without delay,” he wrote to the king, “and so you must cause my statutes to be respected, in every particular, for the glory of God and the Blessed Peter, prince of the apostles.” While Gregory wanted the traditional rights of metropolitans to be respected, Virgilius received the right to use the pallium, to oversee ecclesiastical discipline generally, the duty of convoking a council of twelve bishops in more important cases, and of referring to Rome cases that could not be settled locally. Pope Gregory wrote to the bishops in Childebert’s kingdom, informing them of the restoration of the vicariate at Arles, and reminding them that cases of appeals would “undoubtedly be terminated by our sentence.” [Epp. V, 53. PL 77, 782–9]

The vicariate, however, did not eliminate simony, and late in his pontificate, Pope Gregory wanted a great council of the bishops of Gaul to eradicate the abuse. The pope insisted on a council in letters to the bishops of Arles and Lyons, and to the various monarchs of Gaul. [Epp. XI, 55–63. PL 77, 1172–83]

Some bishops in Gaul, however, were beyond reproach. The early seventh century *Life* of St. Desiderius, who became archbishop of Vienne in 596, praises his learning because, “when he became archbishop, in accordance with custom he sent to Rome to acquire the pallium of the Apostolic See.” The *Life* remarks that “St. Gregory, a great Doctor, was presiding over the Apostolic See at that time...” [A.S. 16: 252]

The Pope and Africa

The Numidian bishops had written to Pope Pelagius II [579-590], requesting that ancient customs be observed, which had prevailed “since their initial ordinance by Blessed Peter, prince of the apostles.” Pope Gregory granted their requests and allowed them to elect a primate, but ruled that former Donatist bishops, even those permitted to retain their episcopal rank, were ineligible for the office of primate. [Epp. I, 77. PL 77, 531-532]

Elsewhere the pope congratulated a Numidian bishop named Columbus for adhering to the Apostolic See, and being devoted to it with all his mind, heart and soul. [Epp. III, 48. PL 77, 643]

Early in Gregory’s pontificate, he received a letter from Dominicus, bishop of Carthage, who wanted the ancient privileges of the African Church respected. Gregory, pointing out that he respected the rights of each church as he defended his own, conceded the request. [Epp. II, 47. PL 77, 586-88]

The Vicariate at Justiniana Prima

Justinian had rebuilt the area of his birthplace, which corresponded to Uskup or Skopje in the Balkans, and renamed it *Justiniana Prima*. In 591, a certain John was elected to fill the see of Justiniana Prima. Because the bishop of Justiniana Prima acted as a papal vicar, Pope Gregory sent him the pallium and confirmed his commission, exhorting him to act with justice and charity. [PL 77, 558-60]

John’s vicariate did not begin well. Two deacons of Thebes in Thessaly had been deposed by their bishop, Adrian, for just reasons. The deacons

appealed to the emperor, who referred the case to the bishop of Larissa, who condemned Adrian. This sentence was also appealed, and imperial letters referred the case to the bishop of Justiniana Prima... who also condemned Adrian of Thebes. Adrian, who by now had received quite a runaround, went in person to Rome. [PL 77, 607-11]

Accepting the appeal, Pope Gregory reinstated Adrian and overturned the sentence given at Justiniana Prima. Informing his vicar John that the sentence against Adrian had been “quashed and declared null by the authority of Blessed Peter, prince of the apostles,” Gregory punished John for abuse of authority by depriving him of communion for thirty days. [Epp. III, 6. PL 77, 607-9]

Gregory warned the bishop of Larissa, again under pain of deprivation of communion, not to harrass Adrian any further. Invoking a decision of his predecessor, Pelagius II, Gregory deprived the bishop of Larissa of jurisdiction over Thebes, adding that any future complaints against Adrian should be referred to the pope’s representatives at Constantinople, or the Apostolic See itself. [Epp. III, 7. PL 77, 609-11]

Later on, under the pretext that John was sick, the emperor had wanted a successor to be appointed for him. Noting that the canons did not permit that a successor be given to a sick bishop, the pope refused, “lest sin enter my soul in deposing him,” but allowed that a “dispenser” could administer the diocese while John was sick, as long as John retained the episcopate. [Epp. XI, 47. PL 77, 1167]

Another incident in Dalmatia caused Gregory to intervene in Illyricum. Natalis, metropolitan of Dalmatia, had had a dispute with his archdeacon, Honoratus, who had however been defended by Pelagius II. In contravention of this decision, Natalis had demoted Honoratus. The pope demanded that Natalis restore the archdeacon, threatening to deprive the bishop of the pallium and of communion, and communicated his decision to the bishops of Dalmatia. Natalis begrudgingly restored his archdeacon, but wrote an unbecoming letter back to Rome. Noting that Natalis had been in contempt of *two* papal decisions, the pope remarked, “*if any of the*

Keys Over the Christian World

four patriarchs had done so, in no way could such contumacy have passed without the gravest scandal.” [Epp. II, 52. PL 77, 595–8]

After the death of Natalis, the clergy of Salona elected Honoratus, who enjoyed Gregory’s confidence, as the new bishop, but Honoratus could not obtain episcopal consecration. The pope was willing to accept another candidate, but added this condition: “by the authority of Blessed Peter, prince of the apostles, we forbid you to ordain a bishop at Salona without our consent and permission,” under pain of deprivation of communion. Gregory added that he did not want to see a certain Maximus, about whom he had received unfavorable reports, elected as the new bishop. [Epp. IV, 10. PL 77, 677–8]

Notwithstanding the pope’s warning, the bishops went ahead and elected Maximus, who was installed under a military guard. Gregory promptly suspended Maximus and his consecrators, threatening them with anathema from God and Blessed Peter, prince of the apostles, if the suspension were disregarded. [Epp. IV, 20. PL 77, 689–90]

Learning that Emperor Maurice had directed that Maximus be received “with honor,” the pope, exasperated, wrote to the Empress:

... if cases of bishops committed to me be decided by the most pious rulers... what am I doing in this Church—unhappy man that I am? But I attribute it to my sins that my bishops flout me, and seek refuge against me among secular judges... [Epp. V, 21. PL 77, 750]

The pope wrote to Maximus, giving him thirty days to come to Rome for a canonical conclusion to the case, and also to the people of Salona, warning them to abstain from communion with Maximus. [Epp. VI, 25–26. PL 77, 815–18]

Eventually Gregory referred the case to Marinianus, bishop of Ravenna. Maximus came to Ravenna and swore that he had not committed simony. Satisfied that Maximus was sufficiently repentant, Pope Gregory

wrote to inform him that union with the Apostolic See had been restored; Maximus could now send a messenger to Rome for the pallium. [Epp. IX, 79-81. PL 77, 1112-13]

Justiniana Prima was not the only eastern see to receive the pallium from Rome. Pope Gregory also sent one to John, bishop of Corinth, confirming whatever privileges John's predecessors had received from Rome and urging the bishops of Achaia to obey John. [Epp.V, 57-58; VI, 8. PL 77, 790-800]

The Pope and Italy

The church of Minturnum was deprived of clergy and parishioners. The pope solved the problem by uniting that church, and its revenues, with the church of Formiae. [Epp. I, 8. PL 77, 454-55]

Populonia no longer had a bishop, and there was nobody to administer penance to the dying, or baptism to children. The pope directed the bishop of Rosella to go and ordain deacons and priests for the parishes. [Epp. I, 15. PL 77, 460-61]

When Liberius, bishop of Cumana died, the pope instructed the bishop of Misenum to make sure that the canons were observed in the upcoming election, and send over the bishop-elect to Rome for consecration. [Epp. II, 25. PL 77, 561]

When the see of Cumana became vacant, the pope entrusted it to the bishop of Misenum. The bishop was permitted to stay in either place, as long as the divine mysteries were celebrated. [Epp. II, 45. PL 77, 582-3]

When he heard that certain clerics of Sardinia were approaching Vitalis, the papal "defensor," to thwart disciplinary actions by their bishops, the pope directed Vitalis to provide "the Apostolic See's assistance" to those who had legitimate requests. However, Gregory warned Vitalis not to act as an advocate for blameworthy acts, and admonished him to show due reverence for the right of each bishop to discipline the clergy. [Epp. IX, 64.

PL 77, 1000-01]

A certain monastery in Campania had been desolated by hostile invasions. The pope placed it under Abbot Agapetus of Sorrento. However, the desolated monastery, which was in the diocese of Nucera, was to stay under the bishop of Nucera, not under Sorrento. "For we so order the affairs of every place as to preserve the rights of each bishop inviolate," the pope added. [Epp. XI, 72. PL 77, 1211-12]

The bishop of Amalfi had been criticized for not residing near his church. The pope instructed the subdeacon Anthemius to order that bishop to stay near his own church; otherwise the bishop would be sent to a monastery. [Epp. VI, 23. PL 77, 813]

The bishop of Naples, evidently guilty of very serious offenses, had been deposed and condemned to do penance. Gregory directed the people of Naples to go ahead and elect another bishop, and sent the bishop of Nepi to oversee the election. [Epp. II, 6, 9, 10. PL 77, 542 sq.]

Reports had reached the pope that the negligence of the bishop, Paschasius, was harming the monasteries, the faithful and the poor. Gregory wrote to the subdeacon Anthemius, urging him to rebuke Paschasius before selected witnesses. If Paschasius did not mend his ways, the letter continued, he should be sent to Rome, "so that he may learn how it behooves a bishop to act in accordance with the fear of God." [Epp. XIII, 26. PL 77, 1278-9]

Early in his pontificate, Gregory had appointed the subdeacon Peter to represent the Apostolic See in Sicily. [Epp. I, 1] Shortly afterwards, when Gregory's friend Maximianus became bishop of Syracuse, Gregory instituted a papal vicariate in Sicily and gave Maximianus the usual powers for vicars. [Epp. II, 7]

When the see of Ravenna became vacant Pope Gregory, as usual, appointed an official visitor, the bishop of Ficulum or Cervia. The new bishop, when elected, had to come to Rome and be consecrated by the pope. [Epp. V, 25-26. PL 77, 753]

Later, when this see became vacant again, Pope Gregory granted the pallium to the new bishop, Marinianus, adding: “by our authority we also confirm all privileges which were granted to your church long ago, and we decree that they are to remain untouched.” [Epp.V, 56. PL 77, 789-90]

A bishop named Pompeius had been accused before Constantius, bishop of Milan, who sent the acts of the case to Rome. The pope, who found the evidence inconclusive, declined to pronounce a definitive sentence. [Epp. X, 29. PL 77, 1086-7]

At times Gregory exempted monasteries from episcopal interference. In one instance where certain bishops were being vexatious to the monks, Gregory strictly forbade both bishops and seculars to interfere with monastic properties, “by the authority of Blessed Peter, prince of the apostles, in whose stead we preside over this Roman Church.” [PL 77, 579]

Pope Gregory, who died in 604, is one of only three popes called “Great.” The Byzantine Church commemorates “our holy father Gregory, Pope of Rome,” on March 12. [*Menaion*, March, Athens 1904, 73]

Pope Gregory was a friend of the learned Isidore, bishop of Seville. A scholar, educator, historian and liturgist, St. Isidore lived to see the conversion of the Visigoths from Arianism, and worked to improve discipline for monks and the church at large. A letter attributed to St. Isidore includes this passage, the authenticity of which has been questioned by some scholars:

As far as equality of the apostles is concerned, Peter is pre-eminent over the rest, because he merited to hear from the Lord: ‘Thou shalt be called Cephas, thou art Peter’ and so on, and he first received the honor of the pontificate in the Church of Christ, not from just anybody, but from the very Son of God and of the Virgin. After the resurrection of the Son of God, he was also told: ‘Feed my lambs,’ *where the prelates of the churches are denoted by the term ‘lambs.’* Although the dignity of his [Peter’s] authority is passed on to all Catholic

bishops, yet by a certain singular privilege it remains in the bishop of Rome as in the head, forever remaining higher than in the other members. Whoever therefore does not reverently show him due obedience, being separated from the head, makes himself guilty of the schism of the Acephalous [headless]...[PL 83: 908]

A seventh-century *Life* of St. Fructuosus, bishop of Braga, praises St. Isidore for having reciprocated the “luminous dogmas of the Romans,” noting that a new brightness had overcome the darkness of the world, “so that from the See of Rome, first Chair of Holy Church, the bright immensity of the dogmas of the Catholic faith should shine forth...” [A.S. 10: 431]

The Era After Pope Gregory

Pope Gregory was succeeded in September 604 by Sabinian [604–606], who had been *apocrisiary*, or papal representative, at Constantinople. Sabinian died in February 606.

Latin sources such as St. Bede and Paul the Deacon report that under Sabinian’s successor, Boniface III [607], the usurping Byzantine emperor Phocas recognized the See of Rome as “head of all the churches.” [St. Bede, *Chronicon*, Ed. J. Stevenson, *Opera Minora*, 194]

The next pope, St. Boniface IV [608–615], is remembered for having transformed the pagan Pantheon into a church dedicated to the Mother of God. The brief era of Adeodatus or Deusdedit [615–618] was followed by that of Boniface V [619–625], who like his predecessors had to attend to the growing church in Britain. The Apostolic See’s role in the evangelization of that land deserves to be reviewed in some detail.

Chapter XX

Rome, the Celts, and the Anglo-Saxons

Christianity in Britain can be traced back as far as the third century. The bishops of London, York and Lincoln were present at the Council of Arles in 314, and signed the acts. [Mansi 2: 476-7]

St. Athanasius, in the opening of his *Apology* against the Arians, also alludes to certain British bishops who participated at the Council of Sardica. [PG 25: 249]

In the early fifth century, when the Pelagian heresy threatened to spread within Britain, Pope Celestine gave St. Germanus, bishop of Auxerre, the mission of safeguarding orthodoxy there. Describing the mission of Germanus, St. Prosper of Aquitaine wrote:

At the bidding of the deacon Palladius, Pope Celestine sent Germanus, bishop of Auxerre, in his place to drive out the heretics and guide the Britons to the Catholic faith. [*Chron.* PL 51: 594-5]

In another work, St. Prosper added:

With no less care, [Pope Celestine] freed Britain from this disease when he banished from that remote island certain enemies of grace, natives of the country, and having ordained a bishop for the Irish, while he labored to keep a Roman island in the Catholic faith, he even made a barbarous island Christian. [*Contra Coll.*, 21. PL 51: 271]

Gregory the Great and the Christianization of Britain

The renewal of the Church in Britain stemmed from the mission which Pope Gregory the Great [590–604] entrusted to the monk Augustine, who became archbishop of Canterbury. St. Gregory defined the limits of Augustine's missionary jurisdiction. When Augustine asked how to behave with the bishops of Gaul and Britain, Gregory replied:

Over the bishops of Gaul we grant you no authority, because since the ancient times of my predecessors, the bishop of Arles has received the pallium, whom we should not deprive of the authority he has received. If, therefore, your fraternity should happen to pass through the area of Gaul, you must work with the bishop of Arles, if there are any defects among the bishops... However, we commit all the British bishops to Your Fraternity, so that the unlearned may be taught, the weak strengthened by persuasion, and the perverse corrected with authority. [Bede, HE I, 27. PL 95: 61–2]

Later on, Gregory the Great wrote to Augustine:

May your fraternity have subject to you, not only [the bishops] who shall have been ordained by the bishop of York, but all the bishops of Britain as well, by authority of our God and Lord Jesus Christ, so that from your words and the holiness of your life, they may learn a pattern of both right belief and good conduct. [Bede, HE I, 29. PL 95: 70]

In the same letter, Pope Gregory outlined his wishes for the structure of the hierarchy in Britain. The bishop of London was to be consecrated by his own synod, and receive the pallium from the Apostolic See. Pope Gregory also directed Augustine to ordain a bishop for York; as conversions increased in the area, the bishop of York was to ordain twelve bishops and have the office of metropolitan. [PL 95: 69]

As for Augustine's ordination at Gaul, St. Bede writes that it had

been in accordance with directions from Gregory the Great. [HE I, 27] Pope Gregory described the ordination as taking place by his own permission— *data a me licentia*. [Ep.VIII, 30. PL 77: 932]

St. Gregory's immediate successors continued to watch over the young missionary church in Britain. In February 610 Mellitus, bishop of London, participated in a Roman synod and brought back letters from Pope Boniface IV [608-615] for Archbishop Lawrence of Canterbury, King Ethelbert, and the entire English clergy. [Bede, HE II, 4. PL 95: 88]

The Pallium, Sign of Roman Communion

Augustine's successors as archbishops of Canterbury received the pallium, a long woolen vestment covered with crosses and worn around the shoulders, from Rome. The pallium represents a metropolitan's authority; its reception from Rome points to the source of that jurisdiction: the Roman Church, center of all ecclesiastical communion.

Pope Boniface V [619-625] approved the transfer of Justus, bishop of Rochester, to the see of Canterbury. As he sent the pallium, the pope gave Justus permission to ordain other bishops, whenever necessary. [Mansi X, 550]

A decade later, at the request of King Edwin, Pope Honorius [625-638] sent the pallium to the metropolitans of Canterbury and York, stipulating that when one died, the survivor would consecrate another archbishop. [Mansi X, 579-80]

A Roman council of 680 under the presidency of Agatho, "the most holy and thrice-blessed apostolic universal pope," addressed the problem of bickering in the British Church. Pope Agatho noted that his predecessors, especially Gregory, had established rules for the British Church, "and we foresee and establish that those statutes, which were confirmed long ago by synodal decrees through Blessed Peter, prince of the apostles," should be observed in perpetuity by all the bishops. [Mansi 11: 179-80]

By the authority of Blessed Peter, “prince of the apostles, to whom our Lord Jesus Christ, the son of God, granted the power of binding and loosing in heaven and on earth,” Agatho defined that each province [*unumquodque regnum*] in Britain should have twelve bishops and an archbishop. The archbishop, who would hold the pallium from the Apostolic See, could canonically ordain his suffragans, but not interfere with bishops under another jurisdiction. [Mansi 11: 181]

A generation later, Pope Gregory II [715–731] reaffirmed the primatial rights of Canterbury. “By the authority of God and of Blessed Peter, prince of the apostles,” he put all churches of Britain and their rulers under Tatwin, archbishop of Canterbury, and under Tatwin’s legitimate successors. [Mansi 12: 247–9]

In 795 King Kenulph of Mercia, proclaiming himself a spiritual son of Pope Leo III, asked him to abolish the see of Lichfield created under Hadrian I [772–795], and restore its territory to Canterbury. In response, Leo III praised Kenulph’s obedience to “our apostolic sanctions, [which] no Christian presumes to contravene.” Citing the original arrangement of the British hierarchy decreed by Gregory I, Pope Leo granted the king’s request, restoring Canterbury’s lost territory. [Mansi 13: 959–62]

The English bishops also wrote to Leo III, reminding him that since the time of Augustine [i.e., 595], the archbishops of Canterbury had enjoyed a faculty from Rome allowing them to consecrate their successors. The pallium was then sent from Rome. The English hierarchy requested that the pope restore this arrangement, which would dispense them from the need to go to Rome for the pallium, a difficult journey in those days. [Mansi 13: 985–7]

The Synod of Whitby, 664 A.D.

A conflict broke out between Roman and Irish missionaries about the proper date for celebrating Easter. King Oswiu of Northumbria listened to Roman and Irish missionaries explain their authorities for their divergent easter practices. Colman, bishop of Lindisfarne, cited the example of St.

Columba in favor of the Irish usage while Abbot Wilfrid, who supported the Roman usage, appealed to the immemorial custom established by the apostle Peter, at Rome. This exchange followed:

WILFRID. Although your Columba— he was also ours, if he was of Christ— was holy and powerful in miracles, could he be preferred to the most blessed prince of the apostles, to whom the Lord said, “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I shall build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, and I shall give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven?”

KING OSWIU. “Is it true, Colman, that these things were said to Peter by the Lord?”

COLMAN. “Truly, O king.”

OSWIU. “Can you put forth any similar authority given to your Columba?”

COLMAN. “Nothing.”

OSWIU. “Do both of you agree, without any dispute, that these things were said principally to Peter, and that to him the keys of the kingdom of heaven were given by the Lord?”

WILFRID AND COLMAN. “Yes indeed.”

OSWIU. “And I say to you, that he [Peter] is that doorkeeper whom I am unwilling to contradict, but rather to the best of my knowledge and ability, I desire in all things to obey his statutes, lest perhaps, when I arrive at the doors of the kingdom of heaven, there be nobody to open them, because he who is proven to hold the keys is opposed to me.” [Bede, HE III, 25. PL 95: 158–63]

St. Bede adds that the southern Irish, admonished by the bishop of the Apostolic See, learned to celebrate Easter “in the canonical rite.” [HE III, 3. PL 95: 120]

Aldhelm, abbot of Malmesbury, also argued for the Roman usage. Writing to the West Saxons [c. 675–700], he urged them not to despise the “doctrine and decrees of St. Peter,” namely “the tradition of the Roman Church.” Aldhelm reminded the West Saxons that St. Peter, after confessing the Son of God, heard the words, “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock...” If the keys of the kingdom of heaven were given to Peter, “the heavenly key-bearer, who opens the door of heaven,” Aldhelm asked, who could despise the “principal statutes of his church,” the “requirements of its doctrine,” and hope to enter heaven? [MGH, *Epistolae* 3: 234]

If St. Peter, Aldhelm continued, received the “power of binding and the monarchy of loosing in heaven and on earth” by a “peculiar privilege,” how could anybody object to the Roman rite of tonsure, and rule for Easter, and expect to be forgiven? “He boasts in vain about the Catholic faith,” Aldhelm continued, “who does not follow the dogma and rule of St. Peter. For the foundation of the Church, and firmament of the faith are located principally in Christ, and subsequently in Peter...” [MGH, *Epistolae* 3: 234–5]

Saint Columban, ‘More Catholic than the Pope’?

St. Columban, a leader of the thriving Irish monastic movement, was widely venerated in Ireland as a wonder-worker and “apostle of the Picts.” Born at Leinster in the mid-sixth century, he received his training in the monastery of Bangor. Later on, he went to evangelize the Franks, and founded many monasteries, including those of Luxeuil and Bobbio. [Abbot Jonas. *Sancti Columbani Vita*, PL 87: 1011 sq.]

Columban had written personally to Popes Gregory the Great [590–604] and Boniface IV [608–615]. The saint’s letters, written about a half century after the fifth ecumenical council, show unmistakeable traces of the outlandish rumors that had been spread against the Apostolic See during

this period. The letters combine respectful language with pointedly expressed concern about accusations that the true faith was no longer taught by the Chair of Peter.

Writing to Pope Gregory the Great, Columban describes the Roman Pontiff as “lawfully sitting on the Chair of Peter, the apostle and keybearer.” The feisty abbot confines himself to such issues as the seemingly endless debates about Easter observance, and the problem of bishops ordained for money. [PL 80: 259 sq.]

In a later letter to Pope Boniface IV, Columban acclaims Boniface as “Holy lord and pope, apostolic Father in Christ,” “presiding over the Apostolic See,” and “sweetest of prelates unto all the faithful.” Columban, whose Easter observance had been challenged in Gaul, hopes that the pope will at least approve of tolerance in this matter. The saint’s previous letter to Pope Gregory had not reached its destination. [PL 80: 268–70]

Columban to Boniface IV: ‘Say it isn’t so!’

Finally, in another letter to Boniface IV, Columban poured out his deepest anxieties. Calling the pope the “most beautiful head of all the churches of all Europe, most gentle Father, most exalted Prelate, Pastor of pastors,” Columban styled himself “the lowliest” writing to “the highest [and] greatest.” “We are bound to the Chair of St. Peter,” Columban assured the pope, “for although Rome is great and renowned she is only great and famous among us by this Chair.” “Rome is head of the churches of the world, without prejudice to the singular prerogative of the place of the Lord’s resurrection,” Columban added, calling her bishop “powerful through the office of the holy apostle Peter.” [PL 80: 274 sq.]

Columban gave assurances about the purity of his own faith, and that of his compatriots:

...we are all Irish, inhabitants of the outermost part of the world, receiving nothing beyond the evangelical and apostolic doctrine. None was a heretic, none a schismatic

or a Jew, *but the Catholic faith is held unshaken, as it was first delivered by you, successors of the holy apostles...* [PL 80: 275]

Notwithstanding the deferential language, Columban was concerned: he speaks darkly of his sorrow about “*the ill-repute [sic!] of the Chair of Peter,*” urging the pope to call a council and clear himself of the accusations against the Romans. In this way, Columban reasoned, “*the cloud of suspicion may be removed from the chair of St. Peter.*” [sic]

By signing the decrees of the fifth ecumenical council, Pope Vigilius had been widely accused of betraying the Council of Chalcedon. Defamatory rumors about the Apostolic See had persisted and reached the ears of Columban, who reported with alarm: “They say that Eutyches, Nestorius, Dioscorus, ancient heretics, as we know, *were received by Vigilius in the fifth [ecumenical] synod...*” Alarmed that heretics might defame the “principal seat of the orthodox faith,” Columban had given assurances that the Roman Church would not defend any heretic against the Catholic faith, “as it befits disciples to think about their master.” [PL 80: 275-9]

Pope Vigilius had had plenty for which to answer, but the charges against him were grossly excessive. First he is accused of accepting the arch-heretic Dioscorus, then *Nestorius* is thrown in for good measure. Everything but the kitchen sink is thrown at Vigilius: the late pope is even accused of accepting Eutyches, who was anathematized by the monophysites themselves!

The abbot Jonas, who was familiar with St. Columban’s original monastic circle, was aware of charges that Pope Vigilius and the Fifth Council had somehow changed the faith. In the *Life of St. Eustasius*, Columban’s successor as abbot of Luxeuil, Jonas mentions a former royal notary named Agrestius, who entered the monastery of Luxeuil but did not stay. According to Jonas, Agrestius went on to Aquileia, which did not accept the Fifth Council. Jonas writes:

...for the Aquileians dissent from the communion of the Apostolic See (concerning which the Lord, in the Gospel,

says to the blessed prince of the apostles: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I shall build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." [The dissent is] on account of the Three Chapters, from which discord has flowed increasingly... Coming to Aquileia, then, [Agrestius] promptly became involved with the schism, and was cut off from the communion of the Roman See and divided from the communion of the entire world, which, as it was joined to the Roman See, condemned the island of Aquileia for not holding the orthodox faith... [PL 87: 1049]

The Mission of Theodore of Tarsus

Sometimes the popes consecrated the bishops of Canterbury themselves. Wighard, an archbishop elect, had come to Rome for consecration but died of pestilence before the ceremony. In 668, Pope Vitalian chose the monk Theodore of Tarsus as the new archbishop. The pope consecrated Theodore himself, and sent him to govern the Anglo-Saxon church. St. Bede, without a hint of sarcasm or whimsy, relates that the pope gave the new archbishop an assistant, lest Theodore "introduce something contrary to the faith, according to the habit of the Greeks." [HE IV, 1. PL 95: 171-3]

Pope Vitalian also wrote to Theodore:

...we have learned of your desire for confirmation of the diocese under your authority, because in all things you desire to shine by our privilege of apostolic authority... Wherefore it has seemed good to us to exhort you, and for the present to commend to your most wise holiness, all the churches located in the island of Britain... *By the authority of Blessed Peter, prince of the apostles, to whom power to bind and loose in heaven and on earth was given by our Lord, we, although unworthy, who hold the place of that same Blessed Peter, keybearer of the kingdom of heaven, grant to you, Theodore, and your successors, that whatever was allowed from olden times remain*

unchanged in perpetuity in your metropolitan see... [Mansi 11: 24]

English Writers and the Primacy

Anglo-Saxons esteemed St. Peter as “first shepherd of the church, prince of the apostles.” Venerable Bede says that Pope Gregory “was invested with the first pontificate in the whole world, and was set over the churches converted to the true faith.” [HE II, 1. PL 95: 75]

In 605 Ethelbert, king of Kent, donated a monastery and church to Augustine of Canterbury, calling St. Peter “prince of the apostles,” and expressing hopes of being led into the door of heaven “by the very prince of the apostolic order, to whom the Lord gave the power of binding and loosing, and delivered the keys of the kingdom of heaven.” [Kemble, *Codex Diplomaticus Aevi Saxonici* 1: 4-5]

Endorsing the charter, St. Augustine of Canterbury calls himself a “legate and minister whom the most blessed Pope Gregory sent to gain the English nation for God.” Augustine threatened anybody who would dare interfere with the bequest with “the apostolic prohibition of our father, Pope Gregory,” and warned that if anybody violated these provisions, “let him know that he is to be punished with the apostolic sword of Blessed Peter through his vicar, St. Gregory... we have decreed, therefore, that all these things, as written, are to be observed by the apostolic approval and authority of our institutor, Gregory, and we approve them by his mouth, in the presence of the glorious king, Ethelbert...” [Kemble, *Codex Diplomaticus Aevi Saxonici* 1: 6-8]

In another charter, King Wulfhere of Mercia [664] calls St. Peter “that prince of the divine faith and of the churches, and keybearer of the kingdom of God.” [Kemble, *Codex Diplomaticus Aevi Saxonici* 5: 3]

In 680, Pope Agatho, calling the Roman Church “mother” and “principal church of the whole world,” confirmed a charter for a monastery of St. Peter at Medeshamsted. Congratulating the king of Mercia for seeking

confirmation of the charter “by Roman and apostolic authority,” the pope decreed that the abbot should be ordained by “the archbishop of Canterbury, vicar of the Roman pontiff;” the pope directed the local bishop to treat the abbot “as a Roman legate and fellow minister of the Gospel.” [Kemble, *Codex Diplomaticus Aevi Saxonici* 5: 23–4]

Noting that pilgrims to the monastery should hope to receive “the absolution of sins, and apostolic blessing from the very prince of binding and loosing,” the pope continued:

...whatever grants of privileges have been permanently granted to this monastery...as well as any that shall be handed down in the future... we confirm in accordance with your request, by the apostolic authority of Blessed Peter, and so charge that they be observed by all kings and princes of Britain, as they fear to offend the very doorkeeper of heaven. Now if, God forbid, anybody of whatever authority or rank presume to violate them, let him, unless he repent, be cut off by the excommunicating sword of Blessed Peter. Whoever observes them, let him be received by the favor of the same keybearer... To this definition let your royal dignity, as it befits your majesty, subscribe indelibly... [Kemble, *Codex Diplomaticus Aevi Saxonici* 5: p. 25–6]

The charter was signed by various Roman legates, British bishops, the queen, and the abbot. Archbishop Theodore of Canterbury signed “in accordance with the apostolic command of Pope Agatho.” [Kemble, *Codex Diplomaticus Aevi Saxonici* 5: 27–8]

In 695 Erconwald, an East Saxon bishop, granted a monastery in perpetuity to a group of nuns, decreeing that if anybody attempted to violate the charter, “let him be separated from the fellowship of all saints in this world, and in the world to come, let him find the doors of the kingdom of heaven closed against him on every side by St. Peter, keybearer of the kingdom of heaven, from whom the grant of this privilege was given and allowed me by the mouth of the most blessed Agatho [678–681], bishop of

Keys Over the Christian World

the Apostolic See, when I went to Rome... [Kemble, *Codex Diplomaticus Aevi Saxonici* 1: 44]

A *Life* of Gregory the Great, written by an anonymous monk of Whitby [c. 700], refers to Peter as “prince of the apostles,” adding that Pope Gregory undoubtedly “had power, with Peter, to open” the heavens. [Ed. B. Colgrave. *The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great*, ch. 19, 27. University of Kansas Press 1968, pp. 104, 122]

In 716 Hwaetberht, abbot of Wearmouth, writing to Pope Gregory II, thanked the divine dispensation that “in our times it has deigned to put such a glorious vessel of election in charge of the entire Church.” [Ed. J. Stevenson. *Venerabilis Bedae Opera Historica Minora*, London 1841, pp. 159, 329]

A sermon on St. Bennet Biscop praises him for having journeyed to Rome to seek out a perfect rule of life “where, through Christ’s highest apostles, the head of the entire Church stands pre-eminent.” [*Opera Minora*, 336]

Eddius Stephanus relates that as a young man, St. Wilfrid went to Rome “to hear the wisdom of the bishops of the world,” *praesulum mundi*. [*Life of Wilfrid*, 5]

St. Bede adds that Pope Agatho wanted to ascertain the state of the church in Britain and the other provinces. Archbishop Theodore of Canterbury held a Council at Hatfield in the presence of the abbot John, who represented the Roman Church. Theodore proclaimed his acceptance of the first five ecumenical councils and the Lateran Council as well. [HE IV, 17–18. PL 95: 199–200]

Egbert, archbishop of York [732–766], was the brother of Eadberct, king of Northumbria. After embracing monastic life at the Benedictine monastery of Hexham, Egbert was ordained a deacon at Rome; later on, when he became archbishop of York, Egbert received the pallium from the Apostolic See. Egbert also compiled a *Pontifical*, or book of episcopal

ceremonies. In the rite for the ordination of a bishop, he inserted a prayer “for the ordination of a pontiff,” which includes this passage:

...to this thy servant, whom thou hast given as bishop of the Apostolic See and primate of all priests throughout the world, and doctor of thy universal Church, and chosen for the ministry of the high priesthood, grant this grace; grant unto him the pontifical chair, to rule thy Church, and all the people... [Ed.W. Greenwell. *The Pontifical of Egbert, Archbishop of York, A.D. 732-766*, Surtees Society Vol. XXVII, London 1853, p. 4]

In the Council of Cloveshoe in 747, Archbishop Cuthbert of Canterbury read two letters “from the apostolic lord, the Pontiff held in reverence by the whole world, Pope Zachary,” which, as Zachary had commanded “by his apostolic authority,” were read first in Latin, and then in an English translation. The pope admonished the Anglo-Saxons to live more regular lives, threatening anathema to those who would despise his admonitions. When the archbishop of Canterbury asked the Fathers at Cloveshoe what faith they professed, the bishops answered that they held the faith of “the holy, Roman and apostolic see,” which was given “at the direction of the most blessed Pope Gregory.” [Edd. A.W. Haddan and W. Stubbs. *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents Relating to Great Britain and Ireland*. Oxford, 1871, 3: 362-3]

About forty years later, Pope Hadrian I sent legates with a code of laws for the Anglo-Saxon Church. The legates, landing in Kent, were received with respect by the archbishop of Canterbury. They proceeded to the courts of Kings Offa of Mercia and Cynewulf of Wessex, receiving assurances of obedience to the pope. One of the legates, Bishop Gregory of Ostia, went on to Northumbria. When he discovered certain reprehensible customs reigning there, Gregory made some additions to the canons from Rome, and the bishops, in council, made solemn promises of obedience to the legate’s instructions. Gregory went on to another council at Calcuith, where King Offa met him with the bishops. The canons were read in Latin and English, and again promises of obedience to Rome were given. [Haddan

& Stubbs 3: 443 sq.]

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle observes that the legates “came to renew the faith and the peace which St. Gregory sent us by the bishop Augustine.” [Ed. B. Thorpe, *Rolls Series*, Vol. 23, Pt. 2, 47]

Alcuin Albinus, a monk originally from York and leading liturgist at Charlemagne’s court, also wrote:

...lest [anyone] be found a schismatic or non-Catholic, let him follow the most reliable authority of the Roman Church, so that we may ever have the examples of our salvation from where we received the commencement of the Catholic faith. Let not the members be separated from the head; let not the key-bearer of the heavenly kingdom cast out those whom he knows to have strayed from his teachings. [Ep. 90. PL 100: 293]

In 796, Alcuin wrote to Pope Leo III:

As much as ever I could, I have always loved the most blessed princes, and shepherds of the holy Roman see; wishful to be numbered, through their intercessions, among Christ’s sheep, which Christ our God entrusted unto Blessed Peter, prince of the apostles, to be fed.... Behold you are, most holy Father, the pontiff chosen by God, vicar of the apostles, heir of the Fathers, prince of the Church, nourisher of the one immaculate Dove... [Ep. 24. PL 100: 178]

The Case of Wilfrid of York

The popes also heard appeals from England. In 664, the priest Wilfrid was chosen Bishop of Northumbria, but thirteen years later Archbishop Theodore of Canterbury, at King Egfrid’s instigation and without Wilfrid’s knowledge, divided Wilfrid’s diocese into three parts, consecrating three

different bishops for them. Eddius Stephanus relates that Wilfrid, “with the advice of his colleagues,” sought the “judgment of the Apostolic See,” going to Rome in person to state his case before Pope Agatho. [Eddius, *Life of Wilfrid*, 24. Ed. B. Colgrave, p. 50]

When St. Wilfrid reached Rome, he found that a monk named Coenwald was already there to argue for Archbishop Theodore’s side. Pope Agatho called a council of about fifty bishops. Two of them, Andrew of Ostia and John of Porto, addressed the pope, opening with these words: “The ordering of all the churches depends on the judgment of your apostolic authority, holding as you do the place of Blessed Peter, prince of the apostles, on whom Christ the Lord, creator and redeemer of all, conferred the keys of binding and loosing...” [Eddius, 29. Ed. Colgrave, p. 58]

Andrew and John added that they had read the reports submitted by the different parties from England, but observed that the documents did not seem to prove any crime on the part of Bishop Wilfrid that would justify the dismembering of his diocese. Noting that Wilfrid had appealed to the Apostolic See, “in which Christ the Lord founded the principality of the high priesthood” and “made firm the authority of the prince of the apostles,” Andrew and John submitted the case to Pope Agatho. [Ibid.]

St. Wilfrid then presented his petition, observing that he had come “to this apostolic height as to a fortified place, and a tower of fortitude.” Wilfrid was confident that he would receive justice here, “from which place I know that the norm of the sacred canons flows out unto all the churches of Christ spread all over the world.” Although he insisted on his innocence, and continued to protest the splitting of his diocese, Wilfrid was willing to tolerate it if he himself could choose the new bishops. Finally, Wilfrid declared his complete obedience to “the apostolic statutes, to whose equity I have hastened with all confidence of mind.” [Eddius, 30. Ed. Colgrave, pp. 60–62]

Pope Agatho praised Wilfrid for restraint and for having sought “the canonical support of our originator, Blessed Peter, prince of the apostles,” and for Wilfrid’s willingness to obey what Blessed Peter, “whose ministry we exercise, shall have seen fit to establish” in the case. “By the authority of

Keys Over the Christian World

Blessed Peter, prince of the apostles,” the synod declared that Wilfrid should be restored as bishop, under penalty of excommunication. While the division of his diocese was to remain, Wilfrid had the right to choose the new bishops. [Eddius, 31–32. Ed. Colgrave, p. 64–66]

Wilfrid was directed by apostolic command, and the judgment of the synod itself, to bring back to England the judgments of the Apostolic See, and show them to Archbishop Theodore and to King Egfrid. The saint’s biographer, Eddius Stephanus, adds that Wilfrid obeyed “the precepts of the Apostolic See,” and after a difficult detour in France, returned bearing “the standard of victory, that is, the judgment of the Apostolic See.” [*Life of Wilfrid*, 33–34. Ed. Colgrave, pp. 66–70]

When Wilfrid showed the Apostolic See’s writings, which were duly sealed, to Egfrid, the king contended that the judgment had been bought. With evident horror, Eddius Stephanus adds that the king, “despising the judgments of Peter the apostle and prince of the apostles, who has from God the power of loosing and binding,” had Wilfrid thrown into prison. Notwithstanding the king’s promises and blandishments, Wilfrid refused to recant and deny that the “canonical statutes, which were sent from the Apostolic See,” were genuine. [*Life of Wilfrid*, 34–36. Ed. Colgrave, p. 70–74]

Meanwhile the king was rebuked by an abbess named Aebbe, who reminded him how Wilfrid had been unjustly expelled from the episcopate, had appealed, and had returned with “writings of the Apostolic See, which has, together with St. Peter the apostle, the power of binding and loosing.” After Aebbe warned of severe chastisements for the unjust treatment of Wilfrid, the saint was released. Wilfrid settled in Sussex, where he converted great multitudes to the Christian faith. [Eddius 39–41; Colgrave, p. 78–84]

Meanwhile, Archbishop Theodore of Canterbury, sensing that his end was near, felt considerable compunction for the unjust treatment of Wilfrid. Eddius relates that Theodore, “honoring the authority of the Apostolic See,” confessed “to God and the holy apostle St. Peter,” seeking reconciliation with Wilfrid. Theodore even wanted to designate Wilfrid as the next archbishop of Canterbury, praising him as “the most learned in

wisdom and in the judgments of the Romans.” Accepting the apology, Wilfrid asked the archbishop to notify the other bishops of the reconciliation, and encourage them to restore some of the saint’s possessions, in accordance with “the precept of the Apostolic See.” Archbishop Theodore obliged, and citing the ‘precepts of the bishops of the Apostolic See,’ the ‘authority of the Apostolic See,’ he wrote a flurry of letters urging the rulers to restore Wilfrid’s possessions. Eddius adds that ‘on account of the authority of the most blessed popes, Agatho, Benedict and Sergius,’ King Aethilred of the Mercians received Wilfrid readily, restoring many monasteries and much land to the saint. Finally, in 686–687 King Egfrid of Northumbria was killed in battle. The new king, Aldfrith, gave Wilfrid a monastery at Hexham, and later, “following the judgment of the most blessed Agatho, bishop of the Apostolic See, and of the holy synod,” restored to Wilfrid the see of York and the monastery of Ripon. [Eddius, 43–44. Ed. Colgrave, pp. 86–90]

After a few years of peace, Wilfrid’s troubles resumed when the king, in violation of the decrees of Pope Agatho, tried to turn the saint’s monastery into an episcopal see. To justify his action, King Aldfrith cited the decrees of Archbishop Theodore— who himself had been sent into England by Pope Vitalian. However, instead of leaving intact Theodore’s gestures of reconciliation towards Wilfrid, the king was trying to resurrect Theodore’s *earlier* measures, which had caused the dissension in the first place. Wilfrid migrated to the lands of King Aethilred of Mercia, who received the saint kindly, “out of reverence for the Apostolic See. [Eddius, 45. Ed. Colgrave, 90–92]

Wilfrid had a few years of peace until Brithwald, the new archbishop of Canterbury, presided over another council that threatened to judge Wilfrid according to the earlier decrees of Archbishop Theodore. Wilfrid rebuked the council for ignoring the decrees of Popes Agatho, Benedict and Sergius. When Wilfrid received a tip that the council meant to strip him of his bishopric and monasteries, he declared, “I appeal with confidence to the Apostolic See.” Although Wilfrid was summarily excommunicated by his enemies, King Aethilred of Mercia promised to stand by him until Rome made a decision. Meanwhile, the saint made his way to Rome. After a long journey he announced, “we have fled to this most glorious see as to our

mother's lap, ready to accept whatever your most blessed authority shall command." [Eddius, 46-50. Ed. Colgrave, 92-102]

Wilfrid received a gracious reception from the pope, John VI [701-705], but found that Berhtwald, archbishop of Canterbury, also had sent messengers to Rome who requested a hearing. Reading a petition addressed to "the most holy and universal pope John," Wilfrid complained of the unjust attacks on his bishopric, his lands, and even the monasteries which had been founded for the redemption of souls. Invoking the name of Blessed Peter, prince of the apostles, the saint urged Pope John to reaffirm the just decrees of Popes Agatho, Benedict and Sergius in this case. The pope also heard from Archbishop Berhtwald's side, which stated its case against Bishop Wilfrid. [Eddius, 51-52. Colgrave, 104-08]

Pope John promised a decision in accordance with the canons of his predecessors, and "with the help of God and St. Peter, prince of the apostles." When the synod reconvened, he declared Wilfrid absolved "by the authority of St. Peter, prince of the apostles, who has the power of loosing and binding from secret sins," and reaffirmed the decisions of Popes Agatho, Benedict and Sergius. The pope also wrote to the British kings Aethilred and Aldfrith, urging them to respect the "pontifical decrees." As for Archbishop Berhtwald of Canterbury, "whom we have confirmed there by the authority of the prince of the apostles," Pope John directed him to hold a synod, and either make peace with Wilfrid or come to Rome for a greater Council. [Eddius, 53-54. Colgrave, p. 114-120]

Wilfrid's biographer, Eddius, adds that Archbishop Berhtwald was "terrified" by the Roman decrees, and, "compelled by apostolic authority," made peace with Wilfrid, who for his part went on to King Aethilred of Mercia. When Aethilred heard the Roman decision, he swore to obey it and enforce it with all his strength. Aethilred even called for his designated successor, Coenred, and urged him to obey the precepts of the Apostolic See, which Coenred willingly promised to do. On the other hand, King Aldfrith of Northumbria resisted Rome's judgment at first, but repented on his deathbed. [Eddius, 57-59. Ed. Colgrave, pp. 122-28]

Meanwhile, in 706 both Wilfrid and Archbishop Berhtwald appeared at a synod of reconciliation, where the letters they had from the Apostolic See were read aloud. Asked about the precise meaning of the letters, Berhtwald explained that “the apostolic authority, and the power of binding and loosing which were first given to the apostle Peter, has decreed of its own authority” that the British bishops be reconciled with Wilfrid. After some initial resistance, all the participants of the synod agreed to accept “what apostolic authority commanded” regarding Bishop Wilfrid. [Eddius, 60. Ed. Colgrave, pp. 128–132]

The Keys Over Ireland

St. Prosper’s *Chronicle* [c. 440] relates that the deacon Palladius was ordained by Pope Celestine, and sent as first bishop to the Irish believing in Christ. [PL 51, 595]. This text was often repeated in Irish sources, for example the Annals of Innisfallen. [RHS 2: (unpaginated), *ad annum* 431]

Palladius did not convert many of the Irish, according to the *Book of Armagh*. This Irish source, which can be traced back to 807, contains a *Life* of Patrick by Muirchu Maccu Mactheni, who was probably a late seventh century Irish cleric. Muirchu wrote:

...Palladius, archdeacon of Pope Celestine, bishop of the city of Rome, who at that time held the Apostolic See, forty-fifth from St. Peter the apostle, was ordained and sent to convert this island, lying under wintry cold. But he was unable to do so, because nobody can receive anything from the earth unless it has been given to him from heaven...
[*Liber Ardmachanus*, fol. 2]

The same passage is repeated almost verbatim in the medieval *Vita Secunda* and *Vita Quarta* of St. Patrick. [Ed. Bieler, SLH 8: 75]

Before long a new apostle appeared in Ireland: the monk Patrick, who was born of a British father, the deacon Calpurnius, and a Gallic mother at *Bonavem Taburniae*, the precise location of which has been disputed. At

Keys Over the Christian World

the age of sixteen, Patrick was abducted to Ireland, but escaped after six years, through God's favor. [*Confession*, PL 53, 801 sq. Cf. *Tripartite Life*, Ed. Stokes, Rolls Series 89, p. 9 sq.]

The *Tripartite Life* also describes a resolution made by the saint when he was thirty years old:

As the holy man was animated, and stirred by the Holy Spirit to obtain the conversion of the Irish, being already thirty years of age, he determined first to go to Rome, the citadel and mistress of Christian faith and doctrine, so as to receive draughts of true wisdom and orthodox discipline from the wellspring...for it was neither becoming nor lawful for him to hold himself out as a master of heavenly doctrine, unless he were first a disciple in the chief school of that discipline... [Ed. Whitley Stokes, Rolls Series 89: 25]

When Pope Celestine sent Germanus of Auxerre and Lupus of Troyes to combat the Pelagian heresy in Britain, Patrick went with them. Impressed with his zeal and holiness, Germanus thought that Patrick would make a fine apostle to the Irish, and sent him to Rome. An ancient Irish writer, called the "Scholiast on St. Fiacc's hymn" depicts Patrick as studying the sacred canons under Germanus. When Patrick spoke of heavenly visions urging him to go to Ireland as a missionary, Germanus responded: "Go then to the successor of Peter, that is, Celestine, so that he may ordain you, for that office belongs to him." [Ed. J. Colgan, *Trias Thaumaturga*, Louvain 1647, p. 5]

A ninth century Frankish monk, Hericus of Auxerre, described Patrick's recommendation by Germanus:

...as Germanus saw him [Patrick] magnanimous in religion, eminent for virtue, strenuous in the sacred ministry, and thinking it unfit that so strong a husbandman should be listless in the cultivation of God's harvest, he sent him to holy Celestine, the Pope of the city of Rome, accompanied

by his own priest Segetius, who might bear witness to his ecclesiastical probity at the Apostolic See. Being thus approved by its judgment, leaning on its authority, and strengthened by its blessing, he journeyed to Ireland... [Bollandists, *Acta Sanctorum Iulii* 7: 259]

Later sources contain similar remarks. The *Vita Quarta* of St. Patrick states that “St. Germanus... sent Blessed Patrick to Rome, so that he would go forth to preach with permission from the bishop of the Apostolic See, for thus did order require.” The *Vita Tertia* adds that Patrick “wanted to visit Rome, head of all the churches, to which Christians converged from all parts of the world,” and that Germanus approved of this wish. [Ed. Bieler, SLH 8: 77, 130-31]

In the last century, the Bollandists published a codex from Brussels containing Muirchu’s *Life* of St. Patrick. The Brussels codex contained parts of Muirchu’s tract which seem to have been lost, and thus do not appear in the Book of Armagh. Chapter four from the Brussels codex mentions how St. Patrick went out “to visit and honor the Apostolic See, the head of all the churches of the entire world...” [Ed. E. Hogan. AB 1 (1882), 552]

St. Patrick preached the Catholic faith for six decades in Ireland, converting multitudes to the true God. Irish annals mention St. Patrick’s mission from the Apostolic See. The *Four Masters* write, “St. Patrick was ordained to the episcopate by the holy Pope Celestine I, who ordered him to come to Ireland to preach, and give the Irish precepts of faith and religion.” [RHS 3: 98]

The Annals of Ulster note that in 431, “Palladius was ordained bishop of the Irish by Celestine, bishop of Rome... He was the first sent into Ireland that [the Irish] might be converted to Christ... In 432, Patrick reached Ireland [in the first year] of Sixtus [432-440], forty-second bishop of the Roman Church...” [RHS 4: 1]

The *Historia Britonum*, generally attributed to Nennius [c. 800 A.D.], gives this account of St. Patrick’s mission:

At the divine pleasure, [Patrick] later received instruction in sacred letters, and went as far as Rome, and remained there a long time to read and study the divine mysteries, and the books of the sacred Scriptures. For while he was there for seven years, Bishop Palladius was originally sent by Celestine, bishop and pope of Rome, to convert the Irish to Christ... When the death of Bishop Palladius became known, Patrick was sent as another legate by Celestine, pope of Rome... and at the persuasion of the holy bishop Germanus, to convert the Irish to belief in Christ. [*Nennii Historia Britonum*, 50–51. English Historical Society, 1838, pp. 41–42]

St. Patrick and the Apostolic See

As a missionary accredited by Rome, St. Patrick urged the converts of Ireland to imitate Roman practice. The Book of Armagh depicts him as giving this exhortation to his new converts:

From the world, you have passed on to paradise. Thanks be to God. Church of the Irish, indeed of the Romans, in order that you be Christians as the Romans are, at every hour of prayer it behooves you to sing that praiseworthy phrase: *Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison*. (Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy)... [*Liber Ardmachanus*, fol. 9]

Probus, author of a medieval *Life* of Patrick, described his subject as uttering this prayer:

“O Lord Jesus Christ, who hast directed my journey through Gaul and Italy to these islands, lead me, I beseech Thee, to the seat of the Holy Roman Church, so that, once I have received from thence authority to preach Thy word with confidence, the peoples of Ireland may become Christian through me.” Not long afterwards, having proceeded from Ireland, the man of God Patrick went, as

he had asked, to Rome, the head of all churches, and having asked and received the apostolic blessing, he returned by the same route by which he had arrived... [SLH 8: 196-7]

Rome and Irish Canon Law

The Book of Armagh includes this canon attributed to St. Patrick:

If any extremely difficult case arise... let it be referred... to the chair of the archbishop of the Irish... if however such a case cannot be settled in that see... we have decreed that it should be sent to the Apostolic See, that is, to the Chair of Peter, having authority of the city of Rome... [*Liber Ardmachanus*, fol. 21, *verso*]

This canon was respected by an Irish synod [c. 630], according to one of its members, Cummmian the hermit. St. Cummmian had become involved in the seemingly interminable disputes about the Easter date. After studying the issue for a whole year, he wrote in favor of the Roman usage. Citing St. Jerome, Cummmian wrote to his fellow monastics: “‘whosoever is joined to the Chair of Peter, he is mine’ ...if I proclaim this with Jerome, I am impugned by you; If I do not proclaim it, I am excommunicated from the universal Catholic Church.” [PL 87: 973-4]

St. Cummmian related how the debate was settled: “...it occurred to our elders, in accordance with the command, that if [disputed] questions are of greater moment, they are to be referred to the head of cities. We sent men that we knew were wise and humble, as children to their mother.” After a successful journey to Rome, St. Cummmian added, the Irish visitors found “Greeks, Hebrews, Scythians and Egyptians celebrating Easter together at St. Peter’s,” exactly as they, the Irish, had heard. [PL 87: 977-8]

The Irish also consulted Rome about the easter question during the brief pontificate of Severinus [638], a consultation answered after his death by the pope-elect John IV [640-642], who according to St. Bede wrote a letter “full of great authority and erudition” on the subject. [HE II,

19. PL 95: 113-14]

A medieval Irish Penitential directs that a pastor who, out of ignorance, allows a heretic to say mass in his church, should fast for forty days [Chapter XI, canon 26]. However, if the pastor allowed a heretic to celebrate as a gesture of “condemnation of the Catholic Church and of Roman custom,” canon 27 adds: “*let him be thrown out of the church as a heretic, unless he do penance, in which case he is to do penance for ten years.*” [The same precepts appear in the “Canons of Gregory,” 51, edited by Wasserschleben with those of Theodore. Wasserschleben, *Die Bussordnungen der abendlandischen Kirche*, Halle 1851: 166, 487]

In 1879 the *Commissioners for Publishing the Ancient Laws and Institutes of Ireland* published a Brehon law tract, which they called the “Sequel to Crith Gabhlach.” The tract, which may be of early medieval origin, discusses penalties for assaults on members of the clergy, and contains this passage:

What is the highest dignity on earth? The dignity of the Church. What is the highest dignity which is in the Church? The dignity of a bishop. The highest bishop of these is the bishop of Peter’s Church, because it is under his subjection the chiefs of Rome are... Where is this to be found? It is in the tract which Augustine wrote about the Degrees of the Church... and the particular law of the Church of Peter, and the emperor of the whole world... [*Ancient Laws of Ireland*, Longmans & Co., Dublin and London, 1865-1901, 4: 363]

About 700 A.D., an Irish collection of canons was compiled. Book XX, chapter 6 of this collection states:

Roman Ordinance: Caution should be used, lest cases be referred to other provinces or churches which use different customs... or to the Britons, who are contrary to all, and cut themselves off from Roman custom and from the unity of the Church, or to heretics... [Ed. H. Wasserschleben. *Die*

Irische Kanonensammlung, Leipzig 1885, p. 61-62]

Chapter 5 of the same book says:

Roman synod: if in any province questions arise and the clergy cannot agree, let them be referred to the greater see... *St. Patrick*: If any grave questions arise in this island, let them be referred to the Apostolic See... [Wasserschleben. *Die Irische Kanonensammlung*, 61]

Book XIX, on “The Order in which Cases should be Investigated,” prescribes that in cases where the power of binding and loosing is applicable, the judge should have recourse to the Scriptures; if he still is not sure of the proper solution, he should consult “histories of the Catholic Church,” and “Catholic histories written by Catholic teachers,” and if he is still unsure about the case, he should “consider the canons of the Apostolic See,” examples of the saints, and the elders of the province. [Wasserschleben. *Die Irische Kanonensammlung*, 59-60]

Irish Hymns and the Primacy

A century ago, F. Mone discovered 8th and 9th century Irish manuscripts that contained two hymns to St. Peter. One depicts Peter as “prince of the apostles,” to whom the keys were given in perpetuity, pontiff of souls, and “shepherd of all the fold of Christ.” In the other hymn, St. Peter is called “pastor of the sheep,” “foundation of the Lord’s Catholic Church,” and “master of the multitude of saints,” to whom God gave “the glory of the city of Rome,” where he “lives victoriously” (*vivit cum victoria*). [*Hymni Latini Medii Aevi*, Freiburg 1855, 3: 68-70, 74]

St. Cummian Fota, [590-662], who enjoyed a reputation for exceptional wisdom among the saints of Ireland, wrote a hymn depicting St. Peter as “the key-bearer, first pastor,” who catches fish with the nets of the Gospel. [Ed. J. Henthorn Todd. *Leabhar Imuinn. The Book of Hymns of the Ancient Irish Church*. Irish Archaeological Society, Dublin 1855, Pt. 1, 73]

St. Boniface and the Keys Over Germany

The monk Winfred was born in Devonshire in the late seventh century, entered the Abbey of Exeter and was ordained at the age of thirty. Combining a love of prayer and study with the missionary spirit, Winfred, with his abbot's consent, went to preach the Gospel in Frisia. When his abbot died, Winfred obtained his bishop's permission to go to Rome, exhibiting letters of recommendation to Pope Gregory II [715-731], who was impressed with the young monk's zeal and sense of obedience. In May 719, the pope, praising Winfred for having recourse to "the head," renamed him Boniface and gave him this mandate:

In the name of the undivided Trinity, by the unshaken authority of Blessed Peter, prince of the apostles, of whose doctrine we exercise the teaching office, and the place of whose sacred see we administer, we ordain and command [you] to hasten [to announce] the mystery of God's kingdom to whatever nations are held by the error of unbelief... We also will that you consider the discipline of the sacrament, which you are to administer to future believers, from the formula of offices of our holy apostolic see... [MGH, *Epistolae*, Vol. III, 258]

Boniface carried out his duties with the missionary bishop Willibrord. The *Vita Prima* of St. Willibrord, by Alcuin, records that Willibrord had gone to Rome to be ordained and receive the "apostolic blessing and command" from Pope St. Sergius I [687-701]. The metrical *Vita Secunda* of St. Willibrord calls Pope Sergius "apex of the pontificate, most worthy heir of Peter," who "at that time held the apostolic court," the "apostolic pastor" who was to confirm the saint "in the first order." [A.S. 65: 440-41, 453]

The *Life* of St. Boniface notes that St. Willibrord had hoped to consecrate him a bishop, but received this answer from the humble monk:

O holy bishop, I do not dare accept the burden of government which you wish to impose on my unworthy self,

because I was sent into Germany by the blessed Pope Gregory for the purpose of evangelization... In no way can I presume to go beyond such a mandate and undertake any other business. Wherefore, venerable Father, I beseech you that, with your blessing and permission, I may merit to proceed to those regions where I was sent by the apostolic prelate. [PL 89: 642]

Moved by this response, Willibrord gave his blessing to Boniface, who went on to convert great multitudes in Hesse and Frisia. True to his oath, Boniface sent a legate to Rome to inform Pope Gregory of the progress of the mission and to consult about all sorts of questions. Boniface was invited to come to Rome, where the pontiff consecrated him a bishop about 722, requiring him to take this oath over the body of St. Peter:

In the name of our Lord, God and Savior, Jesus Christ... I Boniface, by the grace of God a bishop, promise to thee, Blessed Peter, prince of the apostles, *and to thy vicars the blessed Pope Gregory and his successors*, by the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, the undivided Trinity... to exhibit all faith and purity of the holy Catholic faith, and by God's working to persist in the unity of the same faith in which all Christian salvation unquestionably consists; in no way shall I, through anyone's persuasion, consent [to act] against the unity of the common and universal Church, but as I said, I promise in all respects my faith, purity and cooperation *to thee and the needs of thy Church, to which the power of binding and loosing was given by the Lord God, and to thy aforesaid vicar and his successors*; moreover, if I become aware that any bishops are acting against the ancient institutions of the holy fathers, I shall have no communion or conjunction with them; rather, I will prohibit them if I am able; otherwise, I will promptly [and] faithfully report them to my apostolic lord. But if, God forbid, I attempt in any way... to act contrary to this my profession... I shall be found guilty in the eternal judgment... I Boniface, a lowly bishop, have recorded this oath with my own hand, and placing it

Keys Over the Christian World

as prescribed upon thy most sacred body, with God as my witness and judge I have made this oath, which I also promise to keep. [MGH, *Epistolae* 3: 265–6]

The *Life* of Boniface, by his disciple Willibald, adds that the pope gave Boniface a collection of ecclesiastical laws observed by the Apostolic See, directing that the clergy and people under Boniface learn “this pontifical discipline.” [PL 89: 619]

The pope wrote a series of letters to the clergy, faithful, rulers and the pagans themselves, informing them that Boniface, “obeying the precepts of our see,” had a mandate from “the holy apostolic see, spiritual mother of all the faithful.” Noting that Boniface, “informed... of the institutions of this apostolic see,” was bound to preach “the word of salvation,” and correct the erring “from the doctrine of this apostolic see,” the pope threatened to anathematize anybody who would presume to obstruct the mission. [MGH, *Epistolae* 3: 266 sq.]

The *Life* of St. Gregory, a disciple of Boniface who became bishop of Utrecht, describes how Boniface prostrated himself “before the entire clergy and family of Blessed Peter, prince of the apostles, and before Pope Gregory himself,” and how all prayed before the relics of St. Peter, asking him to intercede for the mission. [A.S. 38: 258]

Boniface, who in his letters calls himself a papal legate, returned to Germany, continuing to preach in Hesse and Thuringia, consulting the pope about liturgical rules, the sacraments, Christian law regarding marriage, and appropriate behavior for clergy and religious. Pope Gregory praised Boniface for asking “what this holy, apostolic Roman church teaches,” because “the blessed apostle Peter was the origin of both the apostleship and the episcopate.” [MGH, *Epistolae* 3: 275–7]

On another front, the pope used his apostolic authority to prohibit the bishop of Frioul from interfering with the rights of the patriarch of Grado. [PL 89: 526–9]

During his missionary career, St. Boniface became acquainted with

Pirminius, a Frankish missionary bishop who founded many churches and monasteries in Germany and Bavaria. The *Vita Prima* and *Vita Secunda* of St. Pirminius relate how he had been urged to undertake missionary work, but felt scruples about intruding into other dioceses “without the command of the supreme pontiff of the Apostolic See.” The saint visited Rome and returned to Theodericus, king of the Franks, who commanded the bishops to receive the “envoy of the supreme pontiff” with honor. The *Vita Prima* adds that the *apostolicus*, or pope, had criticized the bishops for negligence and inertia, but that “St. Pirminius, an exceedingly venerable man, and his fellow bishops, devoutly carried out whatever had been fulfilled by the bishop of the Apostolic See.” [A.S. 63: 36–37]

The eighth century *Life* of St. Corbinian, first bishop of Freising, depicts another missionary career which began under Pope Gregory II [715–731]. Corbinian, who came from Gaul, embraced the religious life as an adolescent. In search of a quiet, retired life, Corbinian determined to commend himself “to the doctrine and prayers of the *Apostolicus*,” or pope. Corbinian made a pilgrimage to Rome, prayed at the Confession of Blessed Peter, prince of the apostles, and prostrated himself before Gregory II. Impressed with the young man’s virtue, Pope Gregory directed him to receive priestly orders, consecrated him a bishop, and gave him, along with the pallium, faculties to preach God’s word anywhere in the world. Corbinian made another pilgrimage to Rome, where, his biographer notes, the “supreme pope” commanded him to return to missionary work. [A.S. 42: 281–86]

When Pope Gregory II died in 731, Boniface sent messengers to report to his successor, Gregory III [731–741]. Thanking God for the multitudes of conversions occurring through the ministry of Boniface, the new pope gave him the pallium, insignia of an archbishop metropolitan. At the same time, Gregory III gave Boniface authority to ordain new bishops “by the authority of the Apostolic See,” and answered several consultations about canon law. As Boniface prepared to return to Germany, the pope wrote letters recommending his ministry and encouraging the clergy to join in the missionary effort. Pope Gregory also wrote to the peoples of the German provinces, urging them to obey Boniface, who had been sent, as it were, with “a rule and norm of the apostolic and Catholic Roman faith.” The pope also wrote to the bishops of Bavaria and Alemannia, exhorting

them to obey Boniface as a papal representative and participate at whatever councils Boniface saw fit to convoke. [MGH, *Epistolae* 3: 278–80, 290 sq.]

Eventually Boniface made the journey to Rome once more, to account for his ministry and consult with the pope at length. On his return journey, proceeding into Bavaria, Boniface ordained bishops for the sees of Freising, Ratisbonne and Salzburg, receiving papal approval for his actions. [PL 89: 645–9]

During the era of Pope Gregory III [731–741], Boniface was joined by another Saxon missionary, the monk Willibald, who had spent seven years on pilgrimages, including a journey to Constantinople in the company of papal legates. When Willibald returned to Rome, Gregory III noticed him and commanded him to join Boniface. St. Willibald's *Life* records that when he sought his abbot's permission to make the journey, the Supreme Pontiff answered that the abbot had neither license nor authority to contradict the command. St. Willibald obeyed the pope, went on to Germany, and became bishop of Eichstadt. [A.S. 28: 510–11]

When Charles Martel, King of the Franks, died in 741, his son Carloman asked Boniface to reform the Church in Austrasia. Boniface consulted Pope Zachary [741–752]. Pledging complete obedience and loyalty to “the faith and unity of the Roman Church,” Boniface informed Rome that he had ordained bishops for three sees in Germany, Wurzburg, Buraburg and Erford, asking the pope to confirm the measures “by the authority and precept of St. Peter.” Boniface also had a number of questions to be decided by the Apostolic See: did he have the right to appoint his own successor? What should be done about fornicating clergy—priests and bishops who claimed permission from the Apostolic See to live with a woman? [MGH, *Epistolae* 3: 299–301]

In response, Pope Zachary approved the creation of the new sees, and told Boniface to pay no attention to priests and bishops who claimed permission from Rome for adultery or fornication. However, only at the point of death could Boniface appoint a successor, who had to come to Rome for consecration. The pope commanded that Boniface go ahead and

hold a synod in Gaul, and enforce canon law. Zachary also sent the pallia, or insignia for the new metropolitans. [MGH, *Epistolae* 3: 302 sq.]

Before meeting with the Frankish rulers, Boniface had shown real scruples about his ordination oath, obliging him to avoid the communion of uncanonical clergy. He wrote to one bishop:

I am afraid of incurring guilt from that communion, because I remember that, at the time of my ordination, in accordance with the precept of pope Gregory, I swore on the body of St. Peter to avoid the communion of such [clergy], if I could not bring them back to the way of the canons... [MGH, *Epistolae* 3: 329]

By April 742, Carloman was announcing the results of a Frankish synod, which had enacted several disciplinary canons to reform the clergy. "We have ordained bishops for the cities," Carloman wrote, "and set over them Archbishop Boniface, who is the envoy of St. Peter." [MGH, *Epistolae* 3: 310]

On April 1, 743, Zachary wrote to the bishops of Buraburg and Wurzburg. Noting that the holy man, Boniface, had "asked of us... that your sees be confirmed by apostolic authority," the pope decreed:

By the authority of Blessed Peter, prince of the apostles, to whom the power of binding and loosing the sins of men was given by our God and Savior Jesus Christ... we confirm your episcopal sees and decree that they are to remain in their integrity... [MGH, *Epistolae* 3: 306-7]

The pope also forbade anybody except a papal vicar to transfer a bishop, or attempt an illicit ordination, and threatened to anathematize anybody who interfered with the new sees, or "with temerarious daring" contravened these instructions. [MGH, *Epistolae* 3: 306-7]

Originally Boniface had requested the pallium for three metropolitan archbishops he had established: Grimon of Rouen, Abel of Rheims and

Keys Over the Christian World

Hartbert of Sens. On November 5, 744, a letter from the pope expressed surprise at a change in plans: only the bishop of Rouen would receive the pallium. At the same time, the pope gave Boniface authority for “every province of Gaul,” so as to carry out the reform there. By the authority of Blessed Peter, prince of the apostles, the pope commanded Boniface to forbid anybody who deviated from the canons from exercising the sacred ministry. [MGH, *Epistolae* 3: 315–6]

On October 31, 745, the pope wrote to Boniface, directing him to preside over yearly councils, so as to promote the unity of the Church, and Catholic discipline. “By a precept of our authority,” Zachary also approved of an idea to create a metropolitan see for Boniface at Cologne. [MGH, *Epistolae* 3: 325]

At the same time, the pope wrote to the Frankish clergy, nobility and faithful, praising the results of the synod, calling for yearly councils and urging everyone to obey Boniface, “for we have established him to preach in our place, in those regions. [MGH, *Epistolae* 3: 326–7]

The pope also wrote a long letter to Pepin, future king of the Franks, and the Frankish higher clergy and princes, giving authoritative rules about a long list of questions, especially the canons governing clergy and religious. [PL 89: 930 sq.]

On January 5, 747, Zachary wrote again to Boniface, calling for a council where Rome’s directives would be read publicly, and where Boniface would preside at the trial of three unworthy bishops, Aldebert, Godolfatius and Clement. [MGH, *Epistolae* 3: 348–9]

Aldebert and Clement had been condemned for blasphemy in a Roman council of 745. Boniface had sent a legate to the council, bearing letters for “the apostolic pontiff, resting on the teaching authority [*magisterio*] of St. Peter, prince of the apostles.” The letter recalls Boniface’s mandate from the popes to convoke councils and report any noteworthy developments to the apostolic pontiff. [MGH, *Epistolae* 3: 316 sq.]

Boniface also continued to correspond with English bishops. In the 740's he wrote to Egbert, archbishop of York:

... the Catholic and apostolic Roman Church, when it sent an unworthy, vile preacher to the peoples of Germany that were pagan or in error, commanded me by the authority of the Roman pontiff, that wherever I proceeded among Christian peoples, if I saw... ecclesiastical rules vitiated by evil custom, or people led astray from the Catholic faith... I should strive with all my might to invite them and call them back to the way of salvation. [MGH, *Epistolae* 3: 347]

In 747, Boniface wrote to his brother bishop, Cuthbert of Canterbury, describing a council held "at the command of the Roman pontiff and the request of the Frankish and Gallic princes, in the hope of restoring the law of Christ." The acts of the council, according to Boniface, included this resolution:

We decreed in our synodal gathering, and we confessed, that we wanted to preserve the Catholic faith, and unity and subjection to the Roman Church, to the end of our lives; that we wished to be subject to St. Peter and his vicar; to gather a synod each year; that metropolitans were to seek the pallium from that see; and that in all respects we desired to follow the precepts of St. Peter, so that we might be counted among the sheep entrusted to him... And we all agreed to this confession, and we signed it, and we sent it to the body of St. Peter, prince of the apostles; the clergy and pontiff of Rome accepted it with gratitude... And each bishop, if he is unable to correct or rectify anything in his diocese, is to bring it up again in a synod before the archbishop, and openly before all, so as to correct it, in the same way as the Roman Church bound us at our ordination with an oath, that if I saw priests or the people deviating from God's law, and could not correct it, I would always faithfully point it out for correction to the Apostolic See

Keys Over the Christian World

and the vicar of St. Peter. For thus, if I am not mistaken, if they are unable to correct anything in the people, all bishops must make it known to the metropolitan, and he must make it known to the Roman pontiff... [MGH, *Epistolae* 3: 351]

On May 1, 748, the pope also wrote to various bishops of Gaul and Germany, expressing profound joy at their union with each other and the Roman Church. Zachary praised the bishops' close union with their "spiritual mother, the holy Catholic and apostolic Church of God, over which, by God's design, we preside," and urged the bishops to obey Rome's legate, Boniface. [MGH, *Epistolae* 3: 363 sq.]

Eventually the pope decided to create the metropolitan see at Mainz, instead of Cologne. On November 4, 751 the pope, after summarizing his missionary career as a Roman legate, wrote to Boniface:

By the authority of Blessed Peter, prince of the apostles, we decree that the... church of Mainz be confirmed as metropolis, both now and in perpetuity, for you and your successors, having under it these five cities— Tungris, Cologne, Worms, Spire and Utrecht— and all peoples of Germany who through you came to know the light of Christ... [MGH, *Epistolae* 3: 373]

Pope Zachary, who repeatedly praised Boniface for his obedience to the Roman Church, received pledges of submission from the bishops of Neustria, Austrasia and Germany. [Mansi 12: 336 sq.]

At the end of his missionary career, Boniface requested a special privilege of exemption for the monastery he had established at Fulda. The pope complied, placing the famous monastery under the Roman Church exclusively, threatening with anathema anybody who would dare violate the privilege. [MGH, *Epistolae* 3: 374-5]

Boniface continued to consult with the Apostolic See whenever he had questions or doubts, going to excruciating lengths to account for all his

actions. Pope Zachary always answered his questions, and once reminded him:

You have received the rule of Catholic tradition, most loving brother: so preach to everybody, and teach them all as you have received from the holy Roman Church, which by God's design we serve. [MGH, Epp. 3: 371]

Pope Zachary, incidentally, is also remembered for having translated the *Dialogues* of St. Gregory into Greek. The preface to the Greek version calls Zachary the “chosen shepherd and arch-shepherd and leader of the orthodox faith, successor of the first-foundation of the apostles, Zachary, the thrice-blessed and equal of the angels, ecumenical and apostolic pope.” [PL 77: 147]

About 754–755 Boniface, calling himself a “disciple of the Roman Church,” apologized to the new pope, Stephen III [752–757], for not having written earlier. Requesting the “familiarity and unity of the Apostolic See,” Boniface expressed hopes to be its faithful servant, invoking the memory of the last three popes, Gregory II, Gregory III and Zachary, “who always strengthened and helped me by the exhortation and authority of their letters.” [MGH, *Epistolae* 3: 394]

Boniface also asked the new pope to settle a dispute. At the request of the Frankish ruler Carloman, Boniface had ordained a bishop for Utrecht. The bishop of Cologne, however, was claiming jurisdiction there. Pointing out that St. Willibrord had been ordained by Pope Sergius I [687–701] with a mandate to preach to the Frisians, Boniface had replied that this “precept of the Apostolic See” should carry “greater weight and force” than any claims of the bishop of Cologne; the see of Utrecht, Boniface contended, should remain “subject to the Roman Pontiff,” with a missionary mandate to the Frisians. If this response was just, Boniface requested, “confirm it by your authority, so that the precept of Pope Sergius... remain stable.” Boniface asked the pope to send, from the Roman archives, the mandate Willibrord had received from Pope Sergius, “so that, from the authority of Your Holiness, I may be able to convince the gainsayers, and overcome them.” If the pope

thought otherwise, Boniface requested a new counsel, promising to follow it. [MGH, *Epistolae* 3: 395–6]

In 754 or 755, as he went to preach among the Frisians, Boniface and his disciples were slaughtered by pagans, but his work endured. Later on, the German states were to form a leading part of the Holy Roman Empire, the foundations of which rested upon the body of a martyred monk and legate of the Roman Church.

The Primacy and Western Liturgy

Since ancient times, the Roman Church has celebrated a feast of the “Chair of Peter” on February 22. The feast commemorates the biblical moment at Caesarea Philippi, when Jesus, in response to Peter’s confession of faith, declared: “Thou art Peter...” An early reference to this feast occurs in the *Depositio martyrum* in 336 A.D. [PL 13: 464]

The feast of the Chair of Peter was later adopted in Gaul. Eventually it was divided into two distinct commemorations: the “Dedication of the Chair of St. Peter the Apostle, by which he first sat at Rome,” and another one for the “Chair of Peter at Antioch.” [Batiffol, *Cathedra Petri*, 124–5]

The feast offered homilists another opportunity to discourse about the prerogatives of Simon Peter. In 1896, Dom Germain Morin presented a previously unpublished sermon for the feast, where the homilist declares:

For he [Peter], to whom the keys of the kingdom of heaven were given by Christ, to whom the power of binding and loosing was entrusted by God, received in his person in a special manner so great a privilege, that he nevertheless passed it on in a general manner, in the Church of God. Wherefore not unfittingly do we take the day he received the apostleship or episcopate from the mouth of Christ as the day the chair was entrusted to him... This chair, moreover, is not that of pestilence, but of sound doctrine... From this chair, we recognize, rejoice, believe in and profess

the announcement of the institution of our Church, that is, the Catholic... [PL Suppl. 2: 1337-8]

The Chair of Peter was also celebrated in Spain, where the Mozarabic liturgy was traditional, on February 22. The missal describes the feast as “this day in which Blessed Peter, prince of all the apostles... was entrusted with the chair...” [PL 85: 721]

The Mozarabic liturgy for the feast depicts Peter as the foundation of the Church “of which he obtained the principality,” the worthy pastor of the Church, who holds the principality over the disciples themselves. The texts associate this “Chair” with the Apostolic See at Rome. [PL 85: 719 sq.]

The sacramentary of Bobbio, which has been traced back to about the seventh century, includes these texts for the Chair of Peter:

O God, who on this day hast given Blessed Peter as head of the Church after thyself, since he truly did confess thee and he was worthily put in charge by thee... we humbly beseech thee that as thou didst give him as shepherd, that none of the sheep may be lost, and that the sheep may evade all error... It is truly fitting and just, Almighty God... that to thy servant... thou didst entrust the keys of heaven, and construct a lofty throne on high, to judge the tribes... Today a witness to this is the revelation of the chair of the episcopate of Blessed Peter in which, by the merit of his faith, confessing... the Son of God, he is ordained as the apostle in charge, in whose confession is the foundation of the Church... the most solemn day of the most blessed apostle Peter, in which he obtained every right with regard to the Gentiles and the Jews, which day the divinity itself consecrated, delegating the keys of heaven, that is, conferred the dignity of the pontifical chair... [PL 72: 473]

The Leonine Sacramentary

The date and authorship of a Roman liturgical codex, popularly known as the *Leonine Sacramentary*, have been debated by scholars. The Leonine Sacramentary may be as old as the seventh century or as early as the fifth. Some liturgists believe that the sacramentary was a private collection, although many of its orations were included in the Roman liturgy. The sacramentary characterizes Peter as having “the summit of apostolic dignity,” and an oration for the feast of Saints Peter and Paul includes this passage:

Almighty and eternal God, who by an ineffable mystery has placed the right of the apostolic principality in the citadel of the name of Rome, whence the truth of the Gospel was to spread throughout all the kingdoms of the world, grant that what has flowed into the world through their [sic] preaching, the universality of Christian devotion may follow. [PL 55: 51]

The Preface prayers include these passages:

It is truly fitting and right, just and salutary, that always and everywhere we give thanks to You, holy Lord, Almighty Father, eternal God: who to make this see the ruler [*regimen*] of the entire Church, and to show that what it preached was to be kept everywhere, placed in her the prince of the apostolic dignity and, at the same time, the teacher of the nations... It is truly fitting and just... for it is the result of your work, and your power that the glorious confession of the blessed apostles Peter and Paul, of which we celebrate the yearly commemoration, never be taken by falsehoods or disturbed by adversities, but rather, through your dispensation, *the devout structure of your body everywhere receive what that see, which you have willed to hold the principality of the entire Church, shall have determined...* [PL 55: 56]

The Gelasian sacramentary, finally, contains this prayer for the feast

of Ss. Peter and Paul:

O God, who having conferred the keys of the kingdom of heaven, delivered up to thy blessed apostle Peter the pontifical power of binding and loosing souls, grant that by the help of his intercession, we may be delivered from the bonds of our sins... [Mohlberg, L.C. *Liber Sacramentorum Romanae Ecclesiae Ordinis Anni Circuli*, Herder, Rome 1960, 144]

Chapter XXI

Rome and the Armenian Church

Between the Black and Caspian Seas, above Mesopotamia to its south and below the Crimea to its north, lies a nation with a long and complex history within the Christian world: Armenia. Popular Armenian tradition holds that the country was evangelized by the apostle Jude Thaddeus, while many scholars believe that Armenia was evangelized by missionaries from the Syriac kingdom of Edessa. At any rate, Armenia was evangelized early in the Christian era; Eusebius mentions an Armenian bishop, Meruzanes, who lived in the middle of the third century. [HE VI, 41]

The evangelization of Armenia as a whole began with St. Gregory the Illuminator, whose ministry was described by the historian Agathangelus, in *History of the Reign of Tiridates*. According to Agathangelus, Gregory was a descendant of the royal family of the Arsacids, which was massacred in 238 when he was still an infant. Gregory was spirited away to Caesarea, where he grew up and received his Christian formation. When the Kingdom of Armenia was restored by Tiridates II, Gregory returned to his native land and converted much of the nation, including the king; eventually Gregory returned to Caesarea, where he was consecrated a bishop. Some versions of Agathangelus add that King Tiridates and Gregory the Illuminator went to Rome, and met Constantine and St. Silvester. Gregory was followed as patriarch by his youngest son, Aristaces [306–314], who participated in the Council of Nicea. [Langlois, 1: 105 sq.; 188]

The *Yaysmavurk*, the Armenian Synaxarion or Book of Saints, contains a commemoration of “St. Silvester, Patriarch of Rome” on January 2, with this notice:

The holy patriarch Silvester was from the city of Rome...

When Silvester became 30 years old, he was ordained as priest by Miltiades [311–314], the archbishop of Rome. Silvester lived a God-pleasing life, was knowledgeable of the divine law, a counselor to the senseless and a teacher of truth... He was beloved in the eyes of all, because of his straightforward life. After the death of the Patriarch Miltiades, St. Silvester was ordained upon his throne as Pope of Rome. And he established the nine ecclesiastical ranks, after the order of the heavenly ranks. And he renamed the days of the week: The Sun, he named Sunday... the Moon, Monday... He commanded, and all Christians changed the Great Pascha, for they used to call the day after the fourteenth day of the moon “Dominical.” He ordered to observe the five days and the Sabbath as great Sundays leading to the Grand Sunday. He wrote into canon law that on Holy Thursday all prisons should be opened and all those bound should be let free; and this order is carried out to this day in all Christian jurisdictions... [*Yaysmavurk*, Constantinople 1730, 377 sq., translated by Professor A. Terian]

The *Yaysmavurk* adds regarding Pope St. Silvester that “by his council and confession the First Council convened in Nicea, where 318 bishops gathered...” [*Yaysmavurk*, 381, tr. Prof. A. Terian]

Fr. Krikor Maksoudian, another Armenian scholar, renders this passage thus: “With the instruction and [in accord] with the profession of faith of the same [St. Sylvester] there took place the first synod in Nicaea, where three hundred eighteen bishops gathered.” [Letter to Scott Butler, August 19, 2001]

The Synaxarion of Gregory VII, Catholicos of Anawarza [c. 1300], also has it that St. Silvester “fixed the names of the days of the week... he established that each year, on Holy Thursday, the prisons should be opened and the inmates freed; this order is still carried out in our day.” [PO 18: 167]

P’awstos of Byzantium continued the account of early Armenian

patriarchs in his *Bibliotheca Historica*. Aristaces was followed by St. Gregory's elder son Verthanes [314–330], who was succeeded by his own son, Yusik [330–336], who was murdered by King Tiran. Yusik was succeeded by the priest Pharen or Pharnerseh [336–340], who was followed by the great-grandson of Gregory the Illuminator, Nerses the Great [340–374].

The era of Nerses the Great, then, roughly corresponds with the era of Athanasius and the epic struggle against Arianism. At the height of that struggle, in 343, the Council of Sardica rehabilitated Athanasius and laid down three canons about appeals to Rome. These canons are accepted in the Armenian Church. Even during the Soviet era, the Armenian book of canons, published by the Armenian Academy of Sciences in 1964–1971, includes these canons from Sardica. Dr. Abraham Terian, academic dean of St. Nersess Seminary, offered the following translation of canons about appeals to Rome:

[Canon 3] Bishop Hosius [of Cordova] said: “It is necessary to add this: No bishop shall decide to go from his district to another district in which there are bishops, unless he be invited by his brethren—lest we be thought of as having shut the doors to [brotherly] love. By the same token, let none of the bishops in a given district have public dispute with his fellow bishop brother; let none ask for an arbitrating bishop from another district. Should a bishop think he is being tried for some matter and that he has nothing unjust [in him], let there be another, new trial. If it appeals to your love, honor the memory of the Apostle Peter, and let those who tried [him] write to Julius, the bishop of Rome, so as to have those bishops of the nearest district—should it be needful—appointed as judges. But if it is not possible to do that, since such was his case, he ought to be condemned again; the judgment once [pronounced] shall not be lifted, but that which was [pronounced] shall stand.”

[Canon 4] Bishop Gaudentius [of Naissus] said: “It is both necessary and agreeable to add this decree, which we express

with full, unsullied love, that if a bishop has been deposed from the episcopal rank by judgment of those bishops who are neighbors, and should it be that he ought to be reinstated, let no one appoint another [bishop] to rule over his former see, until the bishop of Rome is notified, to whom the judgment should be presented in writing.”

[Canon 5] Bishop Hosius said: “It is well pleasing; for if a bishop who is accused and removed from his rank, deposed by the judgment of the assembled bishops from his [neighboring] district, should appeal to the blessed bishop of Rome, and should he wish to hear his case, considering the renewal of his examination justifiable, it is proper for him [the bishop of Rome] to write to those bishops who are close to that district that they may diligently and humbly inquire into the specifics of the matter and give judgment in keeping with the true faith. But should he [the appellant] keep entreating to have his case heard and [thus] move the bishop of Rome to consider his petition, he should send presbyters from his episcopal jurisdiction, well experienced, circumspect, bearing his authority to converse with the bishops about the case, sent for this purpose; this would be desirable. But if he shall consider that the bishop [of Rome] has thorough knowledge and [is able to] define the matter [without the presbyters], whatever his most wise opinion, let that be.” The bishops responded: “These seem fine.” [*Kanonagirk Hayoc*’, ed. Vazgen Hakobyan, Yerevan 1964–1971, 1: 254–257]

Decades later in the struggle against Arianism, Nerses the Great signed Basil the Great’s famous letter to the westerners. P’awstos of Byzantium mentions at some length that Nerses was consecrated at Caesarea of Cappadocia. [*Bibl. Hist.* IV, 4 in Langlois, 1: 238]

Over half a century later, during the Nestorian controversy, Armenians once again stood firmly on the orthodox side. Moses of Khoren, an Armenian historian, relates that Armenian translators brought the acts of

the Council of Ephesus to Patriarch Sahag [390–439], and when the writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia, “master of Nestorius,” were brought into Armenia, the Armenians were alerted by three bishops: Cyril of Alexandria, Proclus of Constantinople and Acacius of Mitylene. [*Hist. Arm.* III, 61 in Langlois, 2: 161] The Armenians consulted Proclus, who condemned Nestorianism in his “Tome to the Armenians.” [PG 65: 851 sq.]

Receiving the Tome of Proclus with enthusiasm, Armenians became fierce opponents of Nestorianism, and showed great attachment to the Council of Ephesus. When Emperor Leo I polled the bishops of the east about their attitude towards the Council of Chalcedon, the bishops of Second Armenia also mentioned the Council of Ephesus, praising “*Celestine of blessed memory, successor of the see and the mind of Peter.*” [Mansi 7: 592]

By 449–450, Armenians were pursuing a war of independence against the Persians. An ancient account called *War of Vardan and the Armenians* describes how in 449 Joseph, Catholicos of Armenia, pleaded for help from Theodosius, the Byzantine emperor. Joseph reminded Theodosius how over a century ago, King Tiridates of Armenia had been raised on Greek soil, adding: “he received faith in Christ through the holy archbishop of Rome, who had illumined the dark regions of the North.” [Langlois, 2: 206]

After the Council of Chalcedon, opponents of its teaching spread the notion that Pope Leo had taught Nestorianism. This rumor was favored by translations of the Tome to Flavian that gave the impression that Leo had taught that there were two persons in Christ—the Nestorian heresy. Among Armenian sources, the tenth century bishop Ukhtanes relates that the Armenian Church rejected the Council of Chalcedon perhaps as early as 505 or 506, under patriarch Pabgen. [Brosset, M., tr., *Deux Historiens Armeniens*, St. Petersburg 1871: 282]

Another medieval historian, Movses Dasxuranci, wrote that “Greece, Italy, Armenia, Albania and Georgia” anathematized “the Council of Chalcedon and the Tome of Leo” during this period. Movses is evidently referring to the *Henoticon* of Zeno. [*The History of the Caucasian Albanians*, tr. C.J.F. Dowsett, Oxford 1961: 173]

In the Second Council of Dvin [c. 551], the Armenian Church rejected Chalcedonian doctrine. On the other hand, when certain Armenians rebelled against the Persians in 572 and took refuge in Byzantine territory, they were persuaded to resume communion with the Universal Church under their patriarch, John II [557–574]. The seventh century *Narratio de Rebus Armeniae* even relates that the Chalcedonian Armenians built one of the doors of Hagia Sophia Cathedral, which was named “Door of the Armenians,” in their honor. Meanwhile, Armenian opponents of the Council of Chalcedon tried unsuccessfully to persuade the Iberians and Abas, Catholicos of the “Aghouans” or Caucasian Albanians, to renounce the Chalcedonian faith. [CSCO 132 (*Subs.* 4), 37]

A few years later, under Emperor Maurice, the Byzantines reconquered some Armenian territory from the Persians. The *Narratio de Rebus Armeniae* relates that the Armenian bishops in Byzantine territory broke with their patriarch, Movses, and chose a rival patriarch, John of Kogovit, who accepted the Council of Chalcedon. [CSCO 132 (*Subs.* 4), 39–41]

During the same period, about 596, the priest Kvirion was consecrated as Catholicos of Georgia. Kvirion, a convinced Chalcedonian, was excommunicated by the Armenian patriarch. This event showed how strongly anti-Chalcedonian sentiments had taken root in Greater Armenia.

Kvirion was in contact with the Roman Church. A letter from Pope St. Gregory the Great [590–604] to “Quiricus” or “Quirinus,” and the Catholic bishops of “Hiberia” [Iberia], explains the proper procedure for receiving converts from Nestorianism into the Catholic Church. In some manuscripts the letter is destined for *Hibernia*, or Ireland, but its contents clearly point to an eastern destination. [*Reg.* XI, 67. PL 77, 1204–8]

Some scholars believe that an ancient reference to papal infallibility was preserved in Armenian. The text is a letter from Patriarch John II [c. 575–593] of Jerusalem to Abas, Catholicos of Caucasian Albania. The letter, which was discovered over a century ago, was published by an Armenian

Orthodox named Karapet in *Ararat*, the monthly journal of the Armenian Catholicate of Etchmiadzin. [*Ararat*, 9 (1896), 252 sq.]

Caucasian Albania is located in the vicinity of the Caucasian mountains near the Caspian Sea. Contact with monks from the general area of Georgia and Caucasian Albania, who had monasteries in Jerusalem, led John to write to the Catholicos. Scholars believe that the letter was originally written in Greek and then translated into Armenian.

Fr. Krikor Maksoudian, one of the premier Armenian scholars of our time, rendered for us, from the Armenian text, a critical passage from the letter, which reads:

As for us, that is the holy Church, we have the following dominical pronouncement, which he spoke to Peter, head of the apostles, giving him the superintendence of the immovable faith of the churches, [saying:] “You are rock and on that rock I shall build my Church, and the gates [of hell] shall not prevail against it.” He also gave to Peter the keys of heaven and earth, so that until this day his disciples and the doctors of the catholic church follow his faith—(they bind and loose: they bind the wicked and loose from their bonds those who come for penitence and repentance)—especially the heirs of his holy and venerable See [who do this] with sound faith, unerringly [*anskhal*] in accordance with the dominical pronouncement... [*Ararat*, 9 (1896), 253]

A “dominical” pronouncement is of course a pronouncement “of the Lord,” from the Latin *dominus*, for “Lord.” The Armenian word *anskhal*, which Fr. Maksoudian rendered as “unerringly,” is formed from the word *skhal*, “error,” and the privative *an*, meaning “without error.” According to one well known lexicon of classical Armenian, it has a range of meaning signifying the concepts “without error,” “unerring,” or even “infallible.” [*Bar’girk haykazean lezui*, Venice 1836, 1: 235]

In the seventh century, political and spiritual events took a new turn. Heraclius, who had successfully defended the Armenians against the Persians, urged them to embrace the Council of Chalcedon. An anonymous Armenian chronicle published by Clemens Galanus relates that at the orders of Heraclius [c. 630], Armenian bishops held a council at Erzeroum, or Garin in Armenian. Led by their patriarch, Jeser or Esra, the Armenians accepted the acts of Chalcedon and conformed certain liturgical usages to those of the Universal Church; a dissident named John Mairogometsi, who had opposed the union, was excommunicated. [*Conciliatio Ecclesiae Armenae cum Romana*, Rome 1658, 185–6]

Heraclius' monothelite successor Constans [641–668] continued to press the Armenians to embrace the Chalcedonian faith. The history attributed to Sebeos, a seventh century Armenian bishop, relates that Byzantine soldiers, who were on Armenian territory, sent this complaint to Constantinople:

Now the Armenians never accepted the Roman communion of the Body and Blood of the Lord. [The soldiers] wrote a letter of complaint to the Byzantine emperor Constans and to the patriarch, saying: "We are regarded as infidels in this land. For [the people here] are disrespectful towards Christ God's Council of Chalcedon and the Tome of Leo, and they anathematize them." Then the emperor and the patriarch ordered that an edict be written to the Armenians telling them to unite with the faith of the Romans and not to despise the Council or the Tome. [*Sebeos' History*, tr. R. Bedrosian, New York 1985, 146]

Sebeos also accused the Armenian Catholicos, Nerses, of forcing the bishops to embrace the Council of Chalcedon:

From childhood [Nerses] was raised on Byzantine land, [and] had learned the language of the Romans... He had accepted the Council of Chalcedon and the Tome of Leo... Subsequently he was called to the [patriarchal] throne... He

was a man of virtuous behavior, of fasts and prayers... he planned to make the Armenians accept the Council of Chalcedon, but did not dare to do anything about it until emperor Constans came and stayed at the home of the [Catholicos] and on Sunday preached the Council of Chalcedon in the church of saint Gregory... the emperor, the [Catholicos] and all the bishops took communion—those who wanted to and those who did not. [*Sebeos' History*, tr. Bedrosian, 163]

The *Narratio de Rebus Armeniae* agrees that Patriarch Nerses III Shinoug [642–662] continued the union with the Byzantines. Some historical sources go further and state that Nerses' immediate successors remained in union with Byzantium. The *Narratio*, however, does not go that far; it relates that in 690, Patriarch Sahag III [678–705] promised at Constantinople not to oppose the Council of Chalcedon. The *Narratio* adds that when he returned to Armenia Sahag reversed himself, rejecting Byzantine communion and the Council of Chalcedon permanently. [CSCO 132 (*Subs.* 4), 46–7]

Meanwhile, in 691, the heavily Byzantine Council in Trullo harshly condemned certain Armenian usages. Early in the eighth century, St. Germanus, patriarch of Constantinople, urged Armenians to return to the Chalcedonian faith. [PG 98: 135 sq.]

In the ninth century Photius, patriarch of Constantinople, urged the Armenians to embrace the Council of Chalcedon. At the Council of Shiragavan, in 862, the Armenians made a significant modification of their attitude towards the Council of Chalcedon. A translation of canon 14 reads:

If anybody knows that the holy Council of Chalcedon, or those that followed it, namely the fifth, sixth and seventh councils, are... in agreement with the doctrines of the apostles and prophets, and the three holy preceding councils, and nevertheless presumes to anathematize the same synods, or say slanderously that they agree with the shameful Nestorius,

let him know that such an anathema falls upon himself...
[Mansi 14: 641]

Photius was convinced that the Armenians had embraced orthodoxy; his encyclical to the eastern patriarchs, of 867, celebrates this development. [PG 102: 721-4]

During this period, the Armenian Church was governed by Patriarch Zacharias [855-877], whose homilies were published in 1995 by Fr. Boghos Ananian. In his homily on the birth of Christ, Zacharias said:

Before the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, [the Holy Spirit] gave the worldly kingdom to the Romans... and in Rome He established the see of Peter and Paul, and the leadership of the holy church. [*Dzark*, Venice 1995, 11]

A century later, Patriarch Vahan [967-972], a convinced Chalcedonian, worked to unite the Armenian Church with the universal church. The Chalcedonian faith was also defended by a celebrated Armenian theologian, Gregory of Narek [951-1003]. The Armenian chronicle published by Galanus mentions Patriarch Vahan and Gregory, claiming that “both were obedient to the Roman Church.” [Galanus, 1: 210-11]

A few decades later, according to an anonymous biography cited by Cardinal Baronius, Rome received an extraordinary visitor— the Armenian monk and ascetic Simeon, who arrived in the era of Pope Benedict VIII, not long after 1000 A.D. As a group of bishops was meeting in a synod with the pope presiding, Simeon went to pray at the Lateran basilica. Watching Simeon praying in public, some of the Roman clergy were convinced that the pilgrim was a heretic, and even wanted to kill him. The Roman Pontiff, and the bishops meeting under him, were quite disturbed, and looked for a way to find out the truth about Simeon. [*Annales Ecclesiastici*, 1016 A.D.]

At that time a pilgrim bishop from Armenia was also visiting Rome. This bishop went to see the pope, and gently urged him: “Blessed Father,

by command of your authority let the popular furor cease, and let Your Paternity learn, as I question him, who this man is and what faith he professes, or rather whether he observes the Catholic faith.” The pope took this advice, and directed the people to calm down. The bishop then asked Simeon in Armenian: “Who are you? From where do you come? Tell me then, brother monk, and if you follow the Catholic faith, let that be made known, through me, to all these people.” [*Annales Ecclesiastici*, 1016 A.D.]

The monk Simeon, the same account continues, went on to profess “the perfection of the Catholic and Apostolic faith” as laid down in the Council of Nicea. After some more conferring in Armenian, the pilgrim bishop announced that Simeon was a “professor of the true faith, a worshipper of the eternal Trinity and an adorer of Almighty God.” Meanwhile the clerics who had sought Simeon’s life, punished by diabolical possession, were healed by Simeon, who went on to work many other miracles. The pope and the clergy, lifting their hands to heaven, shouted their praise and thanksgiving to God that His innocent servant had been spared an unjust death. Simeon died a holy death in the west, in 1016 A.D. [*Annales Ecclesiastici*, 1016 A.D.]

Early in the eleventh century, Patriarch Peter I Kedatartz was deposed and imprisoned by King John, and replaced by the monk Dioscorus, who earned a bad reputation by ordaining men unworthy of the priesthood. In 1036 there was a council at Ani, with about four hundred bishops, doctors, monks and notables under the presidency of Joseph, Catholicos of Albania. The fathers expelled Dioscorus and restored Peter Kedatartz to the patriarchate. [*Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa* I, 49-50 in Dulaurier, *Bibliothèque Historique Armenienne*, 61-63]

In the eleventh century, Armenia not only faced military confrontations with the Byzantine empire but attacks from the Seljuk Turks also. The priest Aristakes of Lastivert, writing about 1075, described the tribulations of his countrymen in a work called “Account of the Misfortunes of the Armenian Nation.” A French translation, *Recit des Malheurs de la Nation Armenienne*, was published at Brussels in 1973.

Revival of the Catholic Faith in Armenia

In 1065 Vahram, son of Prince Gregory Magistros, was elected patriarch. Armenian sources, such as the anonymous chronicle published by Galanus, note that Vahram had lived at the monastery of Arek, translating saints' lives from Greek and Syriac, which had earned him the Armenian nickname *Vkaiaser*, or "friend of martyrs." [Galanus, 1: 225]

As patriarch, Vahram took the name Gregory II [1065–1105], and tried to unite with the Byzantine Church; he even went to Constantinople to see emperor Alexius I Comnenus. The union, however, did not materialize. Gregory's journey to Constantinople and unsuccessful attempt to unite with the Byzantines are mentioned in the Council of Tarsus, about 1196. [Galanus, 1: 342]

Did Gregory II turn to Rome? A letter exists from Pope Gregory VII to the bishop of "Synnada," urging him to conform to the faith of the Universal Church, especially regarding the first four ecumenical councils. Citing the danger of scandal, the pope called for the removal of a famous addition to the Trisagion, a liturgical prayer. The pope called on Armenians to adhere to universal usage by adding a drop of water to the chalice at the eucharistic sacrifice. On the other hand, the pope wanted the Armenians to continue using unleavened bread for the sacrifice, although the custom had been sharply criticized by the Greeks. [PL 148: 571–4]

In this letter, Pope Gregory VII also remarked:

...the holy Roman Church... through Blessed Peter, as if by a certain privilege, has been understood by the holy fathers, from the earliest origins of the faith, as mother of all the churches, and so shall she ever be considered to the end [of time], in which it is clear that no heretic ever presided, nor, we trust, will any ever be put in charge, particularly in view of the Lord's promise. For the Lord Jesus said: "I have prayed for thee, Peter [sic], that thy faith may not fail." [PL 148: 573]

The twelfth-century chronicler and monk, Matthew of Edessa, adds that Vahram went to Constantinople, Rome and Egypt, to visit the dwellings of the ancient desert fathers. The Armenian patriarchate became divided within Vahram's lifetime. According to Matthew, Vahram [Gregory II] had more or less shared patriarchal functions with his nephew Basil, who died in 1113. In an election at Garmir-Vank, the "Red Convent," the patriarchate went to the late Basil's cousin, who took the name Gregory III [1113-1166]. [*Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa*, ch. 108, 120, 214-15, ed. Dulaurier, 177, 184-5, 286-7]

Gregory had a reputation for great wisdom, knowledge and charity. Like his predecessor Gregory II, he sought reunion with the Greeks, and again the initiative went nowhere; the Greeks even called for the Armenians to accept rebaptism! [*Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa*, ch. 228, ed. Dulaurier, 301]

In 1142, Gregory assisted at the Latin synod of Jerusalem, where the papal legate Alberic was presiding. William of Tyre, a Latin bishop, records that the Armenian Catholicos was joined by "all the bishops of Cappadocia, Media, Persia, and the prince of both Armenias." William adds that there was a discussion with the Catholicos "about the articles of faith in which his people appeared to disagree with us [the Latins], and on his part correction was promised in many respects." [*Hist.* XV, 18. PL 201: 630; cf. Tournebize, 236-7]

In 1145, Gregory sent envoys to the pope, promising full obedience in the name of the Armenian Church. Otto, bishop of Freising, who was present, wrote that the Armenians asked the pope to act as arbiter about certain liturgical differences between the Greek and Armenian Churches, and to instruct the envoys about the Roman rite of the sacrifice. Pope Eugene III urged his guests to observe carefully how he celebrated the mass. One of the Armenian bishops claimed to have seen a miraculous vision during the mass, which inspired him to obey the Roman Church. [*The Two Cities*, Bk VII, 31-33, Columbia University Press 1928, 441-2]

Gregory III was succeeded by his brother, Nerses IV [1166–1173], one of the most gifted patriarchs in Armenian history. A zealous shepherd and theologian, Nerses was also a critically acclaimed poet. His literary achievements included the poem *Jesus, Only Son of the Father*, an elegy for the captured city of Edessa, and a history of Armenia in verse. Among Armenians, Nerses came to be known by the epithet *Snorhali*, or “Graceful.”

During this period, Byzantium was ruled by the Comnenus dynasty. Nerses had had contacts with the imperial family about the possibility of a union of the Greek and Armenian Churches. The Byzantine rulers arranged a series of “disputations,” beginning in 1170, between Nerses and the Greek philosopher Theorianos. As usual, the discussions centered on the Council of Chalcedon, but this time there were no outrageous charges or demands; Nerses and Theorianos kept the discussions on a high level. Finally, Greeks and Armenians were able to discuss their differences in a calm, objective and serious fashion. [PG 133: 121 sq.]

One of the principal issues was the formula used by Armenians to express their belief about the Incarnation: *one incarnate nature of the Word*. The formula, once used by St. Cyril of Alexandria, was virtually canonized in monophysite circles. Nerses gave it an orthodox interpretation, explaining that Armenians believed that Christ, the Savior, was true God and true man. Theorianos, for his part, made it clear that the Greeks abhorred Nestorianism as much as the Armenians. In other words, both sides confessed that Jesus was one Divine Person with two natures. After a while, Nerses had to admit that he saw nothing contrary to orthodoxy in the dogmatic decree of Chalcedon. [PG 133: 204]

Nerses had already offered similar clarifications to Prince Alexius Comnenus. The Armenian word *pnouthioun*, according to Nerses, meant “person,” although the Greeks took it to mean “nature.” When Armenian writers spoke of one *pnouthioun* in Christ, Nerses believed, they were proclaiming the unity of person in Christ. The Greeks, however, believed that the Armenians, by this expression, were proclaiming one nature in Christ—monophysitism. [Ep. 4. Ed. J. Cappelletti. *Sancti Nersetus Clajensis Armeniorum Catholici Opera*, Venice 1833, 1: 182]

Although the discussions had helped to clear up misunderstandings between Greeks and Armenians, the Byzantines continued to press Nerses for an unequivocal profession of the Chalcedonian faith. Theorianos gave Nerses a letter from Michael Anchialos, patriarch of Constantinople, reminding Nerses that “the letter of the great Leo, Pope of Rome, who is among the saints” would always be considered “the pillar of orthodoxy” by the Byzantine Church. [PG 133: 224–32]

On this issue, Nerses had to admit, the Greeks were right. In the second disputation, the saint also agreed to modify a few liturgical usages that appeared to reflect monophysitism— an issue on which the Greeks, incidentally, basically agreed with the popes. Nerses promised to call the Armenian bishops to a council to consider union with the Greek Church. [PG 133: 268–74]

Nerses was not working to unite his Church with the Greeks alone; he envisioned a broader union with the Latin Church as well. In a letter to Emperor Manuel Comnenus, he had written:

Indeed we have learned that the holy and first of all archbishops, the Roman pontiff and successor of Peter the apostle, has sent you some of his wise men to speak on behalf of the union in faith before your holy kingdom... [and] discuss religious union with you... [Ep. 5. Ed. Cappelletti, *Sancti Nersetis Clajensis Armeniorum Catholici Opera*, 1: 202]

In his elegy for the city of Edessa, Nerses had mentioned Rome, writing:

And thou, Rome, mother of cities, most illustrious and venerable,
see of the Great Peter, Head of the Apostles,
unshakeable Church built upon the Rock of Cephas,
which cannot be overcome by the powers of hell,
Hear my voice from afar,
weep with those who weep...

Keys Over the Christian World

hasten to come to my aid...

[*La Complainte d'Edesse*, tr. I. Kechichian, Venice 1984, 5]

Nerses did not live to see the great union for which he had hoped. He died shortly after he had convoked the bishops, on August 13, 1173. The Armenian Synaxarion commemorates him as a saint. [PO 5: 365-8]

Nerses was followed on the patriarchal throne by his nephew, Gregory IV Dgha [1173-1193], who after unsuccessful overtures to the Greeks turned to Rome. The Armenian historian Vardan, author of a *Universal History*, wrote that the patriarch “sent a bishop named Gregory to the pope of Rome, to describe to him the tribulations from which the Armenians had to suffer from the Greeks, and to request his assistance and his blessing, as the ancients did.” The pope, according to Vartan, received this ambassador with high distinction, had him celebrate the mass, received communion and had him vested in pontifical costume.” [Tr. in DA 1: 438]

In response, Pope Lucius wrote a warm letter to Gregory Dgha, sending an episcopal ring, a pallium, and one of his own mitres. He asked the patriarch to add the drop of water to the chalice at mass, to celebrate Christmas on December 25, and adopt Roman customs about the consecration and use of chrism, and times of ordination. [Excerpts of the Latin text in Balgian, *Historia Doctrinae Catholicae inter Armenos*, 54-6]

When Jerusalem was captured, Gregory Dgha wrote an elegy commemorating the capture of the city. The Armenian patriarch refers to “the pope of Rome” as “my sovereign in the spiritual domain.” [Ed. Dulaurier, DA 1: 283]

Gregory Dgha died in 1193, and was succeeded by his nephew, Gregory V [1193-1194], who was imprisoned, and died in an attempted escape. The patriarchate was given to a nephew of the late Nerses Shnorhali, who took the name Gregory VI. [*Chronicle of Smbat*, Ed. G. Dedeyan, 69-71]

Gregory VI Abirad [1195-1202] continued the efforts of his predecessors to achieve union with both the Greeks and Latins. The patriarch

was seconded by Nerses Lambronatsi, the young bishop of Tarsus, a theologian and gifted linguist who understood Greek and even translated Latin monastic rules.

Nerses was the leading figure in the Council of Tarsus, in which the Armenians tried to achieve union with the Greeks. Historians have differed about the date of the council. Tournebize believes that it opened on Palm Sunday 1196. Before agreeing to a union, the Greeks had required the Armenians to anathematize the fathers of the monophysite heresy, accept the first seven ecumenical councils, and make several liturgical modifications, much as the popes had required. However, the Greeks had also called on the Armenians to adopt leavened bread for the liturgy. Rejecting this proposal, the Armenians replied:

Concerning this article, we persuade Your Reverence of what is just, namely that you agree with the Apostolic See of Peter, and also with our lowliness, and that thus submitting, you renew the law of charity...

The Armenians counter-proposed that the Greeks adopt unleavened bread, “in accordance with the true tradition of the great Church of the Romans, and our own.” [Mansi 22: 200–202]

Nerses had received criticism for his pro-Latin ways from the monastery of Tsoroked, which supported a rival patriarch, Basil of Ani. Writing to the king, Nerses defended his attachment to authentic Armenian tradition, citing the hymn: “Give life to the son of Thy servant, whom Thou hast honored highly through the See of Rome, where they laid the foundation-stone of the faith of the Holy Church.” [Tr. in DA 1: 579 sq.]

The Kingdom of Cilicia, and Union with Rome

In 1198, the Armenians concluded a union with the Holy See on the occasion of the coronation of Leo II, king of Armenian Cilicia. The origins of the kingdom of Cilicia were described by chroniclers such as the

priest Vahram of Edessa [c. 1260], secretary of King Leo II, whose account was translated as *Vahram's Chronicle of the Armenian Kingdom in Cilicia*. [Ed. C.F. Neumann, London 1831]

As the union began, the patriarch and king wrote to Pope Innocent III [1198–1216]. Gregory VI Abirad's letter is addressed to “the head after Christ, consecrated by Him and head of the Roman Catholic Church, mother of all the churches,” “sublime pope in the place of the apostles.” The Armenian patriarch styled himself “a son of your holy Church, which is the foundation of the law of all Christendom.” [PL 214: 775–6]

Gregory thanked the pope for having restored to the Armenians the royal “crown which we lost so long ago, when we were separated from you,” adding, “we have gladly heard and wish to have the law and brotherhood of the sublime Roman Church, mother of all the churches.” Assuring the pope that “all the archbishops, bishops and the entire clergy of our Church are firmly within your command,” Gregory requested his prayers for the Armenians, who were “in the mouth of the dragon, and in the midst of the enemies of the cross of Christ.” [PL 214: 775–6]

In a later letter Gregory called Pope Innocent “supreme head of the entire Church,” “successor of the Blessed Peter, elder brother after Christ [and] prince and father of the entire world,” and “supreme pontiff and universal pope seated on the supreme see of the city of Rome.” “Because you are the father of the entire faith of Christendom,” Gregory declared, “we have all received your command with love.” Gregory promised that as long as he was patriarch, “we shall maintain under your authority the king, the barons, and all the faithful.” [PL 214: 1007–09]

In another letter, Gregory described his efforts to make the entire Armenian nation recognize “the magisterium and primacy of the holy apostolic see,” and asked the pope to send an episcopal ring, the pallium and a mitre. [PL 214: 1012–13]

The chronicler Smbat Sparapet, an Armenian military commander popularly known as “Constable Sempad,” wrote that Leo was crowned “under the suzerainty of the church of Rome and the emperor of Germany.

It was a great joy for the Armenians to see their national throne restored...”
[Ed. Dulaurier, DA 1: 634]

On May 23, 1199, King Leo wrote to Innocent, calling him “supreme pontiff and universal pope.” Proclaiming his desire to lead all Armenians, wherever they might be scattered, into union with the holy Roman Church, Leo asked for the pope’s assistance in that task. [PL 214: 778-9]

Pope Innocent was pleased to hear the Catholicos call the Apostolic See the “mother of all the Churches,” and the Roman Pontiff “head of all the faithful.” The Armenian patriarch, Innocent added, had recognized the prerogative of the Apostolic See, which is of divine right and passes on to the successors of the prince of the apostles. Exhorting Gregory to be a good shepherd to the Armenian people, the pope directed him to persevere in devotion to the Apostolic See. [PL 214: 776-8]

Innocent III also wrote to King Leo, rejoicing that the King of Cilicia recognized the primacy of Peter perpetuated in the Roman Church. In another letter, Innocent sent the king a standard of St. Peter, which he wanted Leo to use in battle against enemies of the cross. Innocent also granted the king’s request by decreeing that Armenians could not be excommunicated by any prelates except the pope. [PL 214: 779-80, 815]

Patriarch Gregory VI Abirad died in 1203, and was followed by the former bishop of Sis, John VII [1203-1210], who in 1201 had written to Pope Innocent III, recognizing “the primacy and magisterium of the Apostolic See.” Promising to work to bring all Armenia into union with the Roman Church, John had asked for the insignia of office: episcopal ring, pallium and mitre. John had also asked the pope to grant Armenian crusaders the same indulgences as western crusaders enjoyed. [PL 214: 1012-3]

In response, Innocent III praised the Catholicos for recognizing the “magisterium and primacy of the Apostolic See.” Calling John a “venerable brother” and “great member of God’s Church,” Innocent announced that his legates were going to bring John the pallium. [PL 214: 1012-13]

When the papal legates brought the pallium in 1205, the Armenian Catholicos swore an oath of “obedience and reverence to the holy Roman Church,” promising to visit the Roman Church, “mother and mistress of all the churches,” every five years, either by himself or through delegates, and to participate in overseas councils. Writing to Pope Innocent, Patriarch John announced that “the Armenian Church, recognizing the divinely granted primacy and magisterium of the holy Roman Church, has become [her] most devoted daughter.” [PL 215: 692-3]

Decades later, referring to the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, the Armenian chronicler Hetum, count of Gorigos, wrote: “Pope Innocent held a general council to deliver Jerusalem from the hands of the infidel...” [Ed. Dulaurier, DA 1:483]

Shortly before 600, when Patriarch Kvirion embraced the Chalcedonian faith, the Armenian and Georgian churches had broken with each other. Now, over six centuries later, Armenians were cooperating with the kingdom of Georgia in the Crusades. In 1224, Pope Honorius III [1216-1227] received letters from Queen Roussoutana of Georgia, letters addressed “To the most holy pope, father and master of all Christians, holding the see of Blessed Peter.” Roussoutana offered excuses for failing to comply with the commands of a Roman legate to participate in new efforts to deliver the Holy Land, on the grounds that 6,000 Georgians had recently been slaughtered by Tartars. [Raynaldus, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, 1224 A.D.]

The Queen’s messengers also brought letters from a military commander named John, “Constable of all Armenia,” addressed to “the most holy pope, father and master of all Christendom, holding the see of Blessed Peter.” John offered similar explanations for why Armenians and Georgians had not been able to participate in the recent crusades. The pope, in response, praised the queen’s devotion to the Roman Church, “mother and mistress of all Christians,” and her pious desires to liberate the Holy Land. [Raynaldus, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, 1224 A.D.]

In 1240 the pope’s successor, Gregory IX [1227-1241] wrote again

to the queen of Georgia, who had requested Rome's communion and assistance in the crusades. The reply of Gregory IX contains his warm greetings and a sort of mini-treatise on the nature of papal primacy. [Raynaldus, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, 1240 A.D., 38-45]

Under the next Armenian patriarch, Constantine I, there was conflict in the late 1230s between the Armenians and the Latin patriarchate of Antioch. Claiming that Armenia, as part of the "East," fell within the ancient territory of Antioch, the Latin patriarch had complained that the Armenians were being disobedient. [Raynaldus, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, 1238 A.D., 34-35]

Patriarch Constantine and King Hetum of Armenia wrote to Pope Gregory IX [1227-1241], claiming to recognize no other superior besides the Roman Pontiff. Gregory IX reacted positively to the letter of the Armenians. The pope confirmed the customs of the Armenian Church in use since the time of Pope Silvester and Gregory the Illuminator, and, as a sign of apostolic affection, sent a new pallium, mitre, ring and stole to the Catholicos. [Potthast, *Regesta Pontificum Romanorum*, Berlin 1874, 1: 907]

While there were moments of tension between the Holy See and Armenian political and ecclesiastical officials, the union continued. Under Patriarch Stephen IV Hromglaietsi [1290-1293], a synod decided that Armenians would celebrate Easter on the date fixed by the Catholic Church. [Tournbize, 301. Cf. *Chronicle of Smbat*, in DA 1: 653-54]

In the era of Stephen's successor, Gregory VII of Anawarza [1293-1307], the center of the patriarchate was moved to the city of Sis, capital of the Kingdom of Cilicia. The patriarch had sent an embassy bearing letters to Rome, and in 1298 Pope Boniface VIII sent this reply:

...from the contents of your letter and the account of your messenger, who presented it to us, our apostleship has learned of the reverence and devotion you have for us and the holy Roman Church, mother and mistress of all the churches. The true and pure profession [of faith] also became known, by which you humbly recognize us as head of the universal

Keys Over the Christian World

orthodox church, successor of Peter, vicar of Jesus Christ and pastor of the universal flock of the Lord... [Raynaldus, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, 1298 A.D., 17 sq.]

Gregory VII had planned a council to establish Armenia's conformity with the Catholic Church on doctrine, essential disciplinary matters, and major liturgical feasts. He died before the council opened, but the sessions began nevertheless in 1307, in the Cathedral of Sophia. The Fathers professed the faith of the first seven ecumenical councils, particularly the doctrine of two natures, wills and operations in Christ. On liturgical matters, the Fathers agreed to use the 'mixed chalice' at the holy sacrifice [i.e., add a drop of water to the wine], drop the addition to the Trisagion, and celebrate the principal feasts on the days observed by the Roman Church. [Mansi 25: 133 sq.]

The bishops of the Council of Sis affirmed the Roman primacy in these terms:

...the great Bishop of Milan, St. Ambrose commended it in his writings that everyone must obey the holy and apostolic Roman Church, which was confirmed in the orthodox faith by the apostle Peter. For just as the body ought to obey the head, in like manner the Universal Church, which is the body of Christ, must obey him, who was established by Christ the Lord as head of the entire Church. [Mansi 25: 137]

The decrees of the Second Council of Sis were reaffirmed by the Council of Adana, which met in 1316 under Patriarch Constantine and King Oschin. Eighteen bishops and a small group of Vartapeds, abbots and nobles had participated in the council. [Mansi 25: 655-70. Cf. Azarian, 49-51]

During this period the popes were informed of certain discrepancies between Armenian and Roman usage in the administration of some sacraments. King Oschin of Cilicia sent an embassy to Rome that included

James, the Armenian bishop of Gaban. Writing to King Oschin, Pope John XXII announced that James had signed a completely Catholic profession of faith, including this passage:

...Nor do we omit that as the sacrosanct Roman Church, holding supreme and full primacy and principality over the entire Catholic Church (which, along with the plenitude of power, she truly and humbly recognizes that she received from the Lord Himself in Blessed Peter, prince and summit of the apostles), is bound, more than any others, to defend the truth of the faith, even thus, if any questions arise concerning the faith, she must define them by her judgment... and to her all the Churches are subject, and their prelates owe her both obedience and reverence, in whom the plenitude of power consists in such a way that she admits the rest of the Churches to a part of her solicitude... [Raynaldus, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, 1318 A.D., 11]

Meanwhile, a monastic group was working to reconcile Armenians in western Persia: the Brothers of Union, whose origin sprang from a theological discussion between a Latin bishop, Bartholomew the Little, and a dozen Armenian Vartapeds or doctors led by the monk John of Kerni. Convinced that the Roman faith was correct, John and his fellow Armenian doctors made their submission to the Roman Church. John described his conversion in a letter to his new brethren, which speaks of numerous conversions occurring through the ministry of the brothers. At its peak, the new congregation of “Unitors” or brothers of union had dozens of monasteries and hundreds of religious, and some of the brothers even became bishops in Armenia. [Galanus, 1: 513 sq.]

The Brothers of Union had the mission of clearing up misunderstandings that dated back to the Council of Chalcedon, in the fifth century. Unfortunately, the misunderstandings persisted on many sides. A formal complaint submitted to Pope Benedict XII [1334–1342] accused the Armenians of over a hundred errors; the complaint threw together accusations of doctrinal heresies, superstitious practices, liturgical abuses,

and even simple liturgical differences between Armenian and Roman usages.

The Council of Sis in 1342, under Patriarch Mekhitar, reaffirmed the Armenian Church's loyalty to the Holy See. The patriarch and Council Fathers submitted detailed reassurances that they followed Catholic doctrine in every respect. [Mansi 25: 1185-8]

Embassies were also exchanged between Rome and the Armenians, who promised to accept whatever doctrinal or disciplinary decisions Rome deemed it necessary to make. Pleased with the spirit of obedience shown by the Armenians, in 1346 Pope Clement VI [1342-1352] wrote to the Catholicos, Mekhitar, and the rest of the Armenian clergy:

...after convoking your synod, to the extent that you were conveniently able to do so, you rejected and condemned the errors already mentioned, as is contained in the *libellus* [profession of faith] which you sent us through your ambassadors and messengers, adding none the less in your letters that if, in your books which you commonly used, other errors perhaps are found which in any way are opposed to the same faith and the very doctrine that the same Roman and universal Catholic Church holds, professes and teaches, [you are prepared] utterly to abolish and remove them in accordance with our command and that of the same Roman Church to which you confess that you are subject, and which you recognize as head of all the churches, and which holds the primacy over all churches not only of the Armenians, but of all others... [Raynaldus, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, 1346 A.D., 68-9]

We know that Patriarch Mekhithar gave Rome the desired reassurances from a letter of Pope Clement VI, who wrote to Mekhithar in 1351:

...you say that you and the Armenian Church which obeys you believe and hold, promise to hold, and say— you and

the entire Armenian Church obedient to you— that the same Roman Church, whose supreme pontiff is the Pope of Rome, is the only Catholic [church], and in her alone is true salvation and the one true faith... you say that you believe and hold that only the Roman pontiff has the plenitude of authority that blessed Peter the apostle had, and that the Roman pontiff himself alone is the universal vicar of Christ, and that you, the Catholicos of the Armenians, are and must be obedient to the Roman Pontiff, but that because of this obedience, you do not want yourself or your church in any way to diminish or lose the favors, liberties, pastoral care, dioceses, rights, and power of commanding all Armenians, which your predecessors and the Armenian Church received and held from the Roman Church herself; indeed you implore that we, who are the Roman Pontiff, increase, in your favor and that of your church, your liberties and rights and those of your church, as far as it may be done in accordance with God's will, unto our everlasting memory. Again you say that you believe and hold that bishops of the Catholic and apostolic church must be obedient to the Roman Pontiff, because Christ gave the plenitude of authority to Blessed Peter for him and those who were to take his place. In like manner you say that you believe that each Roman Pontiff, who is supreme, past, present and future, was, is and shall be the locumtenens of Blessed Peter, because he was and is and will be immediately the universal vicar of Christ. In like manner you promise that as far as you are able, you will make sure that all your subjects, ecclesiastical and secular, will firmly hold and believe each and all of the above... [Raynaldus, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, 1351 A.D.]

This letter from Clement VI continued to ask Mekhithar for even more reassurances; for example, the pope went on to pose this question:

...whether you have believed and still believe that when doubts arise concerning the Catholic faith, the Roman

Pontiff may, by an authentic determination to which it is necessary to adhere inviolably, impose the faith, and that whatever he determines to be true by the authority of the keys given to him by Christ is true and Catholic... [Raynaldus, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, 1351 A.D.]

The Kingdom of Cilicia Falls

The union continued up to the fall of the Kingdom of Cilicia, late in the fourteenth century. In the fifteenth century, when Pope Eugene IV convoked the Council of Florence to secure union with the eastern churches, the Armenian patriarch Constantine V responded. In 1438, Constantine appointed delegates with written instructions to take part in the council. “As St. Silvester and St. Gregory [the Illuminator] were in concord, even so may God give us concord in peace and love and union,” wrote the Armenian patriarch, who added that he was ready “to obey whatever the Holy Spirit enlightened the holy synod” to do. [Mansi 31: 1728]

The Armenian patriarchate had sent delegates to the Council of Florence, who after their arrival at Rome delivered a discourse describing the pope in these words:

You hold the see of Christ, you are the vicar of Christ in the see of the apostles. We have come to our head; we have come to our shepherd. The member that distances itself from you, and the flock that has separated itself from you, the wild beast shall devour: the church that has not followed or upheld you has been overturned from its very foundation. O head, show compassion to the members; O shepherd, gather together the flock; O foundation, strengthen the Church. You who have the power of the keys of heaven, open to us the door of eternal life. We have come to Your Holiness with the authority of our patriarch, and all the bishops of our nation... Teach us if there is any defect in our creed and our faith. [G. Hofmann, *Orientalium Documenta Minora*, Rome 1953, doc. 35]

In its decree of union, *Laetentur coeli*, the Council of Florence included this passage about the primacy:

...we define that the holy apostolic see and the Roman pontiff hold the primacy in the whole world, and that the Roman pontiff is the successor of Blessed Peter, prince of the apostles, and the true vicar of Christ, and head of the entire Church and father and teacher of all Christians, and that to him, in Blessed Peter, full power of feeding, ruling and governing the universal church was delivered by our Lord Jesus Christ, as it is also contained in the acts of ecumenical councils, and in the sacred canons... [Mansi 31: 1697]

When the Armenian delegates returned to their homeland, however, Patriarch Constantine V was dead and his successor, Gregory IX Musabekianz, was in Egypt on ecclesiastical business. In opposition to the patriarchate of Sis, a rival patriarch was created at Etchmiadzin, who was unsympathetic to union with Catholics. [Balgian, *Historia Doctrinae Catholicae inter Armenos*, 156 sq.]

Nevertheless, in the late fifteenth century we have at least one instance of friendly contacts between Rome and an Armenian prelate. In 1489 Martyrios, bishop of Arzendjan in Armenia, went on a pilgrimage to Rome and other holy places in western Europe that lasted several years. Martyrios left an account of his travels which was translated by M. Saint-Martin in *Journal Asiatique*, December 1826.

“For a long time,” Martyrios wrote, “I had desired to go and visit the tomb of the holy prince of the apostles.” After several months, the Armenian bishop did reach Rome, and offered this account of his entrance into the city:

...in thirty days we came into the great city of Rome; may God preserve it. There are the holy and most glorious bodies of the princes of the apostles, Saint Peter and Saint Paul. We

came to venerate them and ask them for the remission of our sins, and those of our father and mother and benefactors... Every day I visited ten or twenty great and beautiful churches, and every day I went to ask the prince of the apostles to grant me the remission of my sins... Three times I was introduced to the pope, who received me with kindness and a very singular graciousness; he gave me a letter of recommendation and everybody was astonished by the singular favor he showed me... [*Journal Asiatique*, December 1826: 346, 348, 350]

Finally, after several more years of pilgrimages, the Armenian bishop returned to Rome, “at the feet of the prince of the apostles,” during Great Lent of 1496. [*Journal Asiatique*, December 1826: 373]

About this time, Rome also heard from Constantine, king of Georgia, who had sent the Basilian monk Nilus to Rome, requesting the Decree of Union promulgated at the Council of Florence. Pope Alexander VI replied in 1496, urging the Georgians to accept the Roman primacy and the other decrees of the council. [Raynaldus, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, 1496 A.D., 21-22]

The Modern Era

Even after the kingdom of Cilicia fell, certain individual patriarchs continued to make their submission to the Roman Pontiff. On August 21, 1549, the cardinal priest Marcellinus, at a meeting of cardinals called a consistory, mentioned that “a certain Armenian patriarch” had just come to Rome, offering obedience to His Holiness and the Roman Church, and requesting that the patriarchal election be confirmed by His Holiness. [Raynaldus, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, 1549 A.D., 35]

In 1563, the Armenian Catholicos Michael wrote a letter to Pope Pius IV, which was brought by a messenger named Abgar. The patriarch wrote that the messenger had two letters, “one to grant obedience to Your

Holiness in the name of us all, and devoutly to kiss the feet of Your Beatitude... firmly hoping and asking that you confirm and renew our covenant, which the most blessed Pope Silvester of holy memory and the holy emperor Constantine once granted to our king... and to St. Gregory, our first patriarch or Catholicos, which we implore you to confirm... renewing that old friendship among us, so that there may be one flock and one shepherd..." [Raynaldus, *Annales*, 1564 A.D.]

Although his profession of faith reflected the beliefs of separated Armenians— professing belief, for example, in only three ecumenical councils— the patriarch wrote:

...we say that our first patriarch was St. Gregory, who first came to the city of Rome, whom St. Silvester blessed and consecrated in the time of Emperor Constantine... we are all obedient to Your Holiness, and to your word. Whatever you shall command [our messenger], we shall receive devoutly... You are indeed supreme pontiff of the four corners of the world; whatever you shall loose shall be loosed, and whatever you shall bind shall be bound... but absolve us and count us among your faithful flocks... Again we confess that Christ said to St. Peter: "feed my sheep," for whom He also prayed that his faith would not fail; whoever among us does not confess that the see of Peter is greater, and that the lord Roman Pontiff is head and pastor of the whole world and holder of the keys, denies both the gospels and Jerusalem and the see of Gregory [the Illuminator] of Etchmiadzin... [Raynaldus, *ad annum* 1564]

Clemens Galanus, a Theatine missionary to the east in the early seventeenth century, knew of several Armenian dignitaries who had accepted the Roman primacy. Galanus drew up a list of Catholic Armenian patriarchs, including David IV [1587-1629], Melchisedech [1593-1624] and Movses [1629-1632]. [*Conciliatio Ecclesiae Armenae cum Romana*, Rome 1650, *Catalogue of Armenian Patriarchs*, unpaginated].

In his letter forwarded in 1610, Melchisedech wrote to Pope Paul V [1605-1621]:

I Melchisedech, Patriarch of the Armenians in the place of St. Gregory [the Illuminator] write letters of love and greetings to... the supreme and glorious pope of Rome, the blessed and magnificent Paul V residing in the Apostolic See, confirmed upon the immovable rock by the hands of the eternal Father and the Son who said: "Thou art Peter..." Whoever falls upon this stone is to be crushed; upon whomsoever it falls, it shall grind him down... [Bzovius, Abraham. *Pontifex Romanus*. Cologne 1619: 202]

Repeatedly comparing the pope and the Apostolic See to the sun, Melchisedech alluded to their indefectible faith and universal jurisdiction, writing:

...as the sun is the principle of human life and of all the living, even so you too, the living rock of life-giving faith placed in [this] see provide the origin of life to all the faithful, since within your bosom all generations of Christians are gathered together, as it is written: "upon this rock I shall build my church." ...and as that one [sun] alone... gives light to the whole world and contains... all living and inanimate things, so that it appears to command all things, even so are you alone, by the supreme power of the Apostolic See, in charge of all Christians, with authority, and contain all within your command... there is none superior to you, but rather are all subject to your authority, as the Lord said: "to thee shall I give the keys of the kingdom of heaven." [Bzovius, Abraham. *Pontifex Romanus*. Cologne 1619: 203]

In his second letter to Pope Paul V, written on March 22, 1613, Patriarch Melchisedech wrote:

[To the] admirable, most worshipful, most highly glorious

and supreme universal prince of all nations, kings, princes, powers and all Christians everywhere who are joined by faith in the fold of the Church... which Christ entrusted to Peter, prince of the apostles, saying: “feed my sheep.” [To the] heir and possessor of the most holy see, venerable pope, prince of Rome, glory of all pontiffs, who sits in the supreme chair with supreme glory, exalted over all... I have read the letters of Your Holiness with immense joy, to the mutual rejoicing of my fellow bishops, who saw in them the consolations of sweetness and all the words arranged in good order... beseeching Your Holiness, that if you see us deficient in any matter which escapes our notice altogether, to declare it and warn us in your wisdom, for we, in view of our weakness, are ready to obey not only in these matters but also all dogmas and rites of the Roman Church, so that there may be one fold and one Shepherd. We desire that other Christians do this as well, so that we may be one heart and soul in the Lord, with which, in view of the pastoral office, it befits you, who are the head of the Church, to be concerned... [Bzovius, *Pontifex Romanus*. Cologne 1619: 207–8]

Fr. Joseph Besson, a seventeenth century Jesuit missionary, wrote a primary account of the missions in Syria, which showed that in his day, remnants of the Dominican “Brothers of Union” were in the holy land. The priest wrote that the Armenian Catholics in Syria had come “from Persia, from a province called Nakshivan, where they have a bishop and several religious of St. Dominic...” [*La Syrie et la Terre Sainte*, new ed. Paris 1862: 42–3]

Fr. Besson seems to be referring to Patriarch Philipos [1633–1655] when he writes of “the patriarch of the Armenians Philip, who is patriarch of Greater Armenia, whose see is in Persia at Etchmiadzin. When this true prelate had come to Aleppo to visit the holy places... and gave witness that he was Catholic in his heart...” [*La Syrie et la Terre Sainte*, Paris 1862: 43]

Keys Over the Christian World

Fr. Besson mentioned one Jesuit missionary who brought a thousand Armenians into the Catholic Church, including a bishop who was promptly expelled by his compatriots, withdrew into Cappadocia and became a model monastic and abbot. This Armenian bishop, Fr. Besson continued, even wanted to join the Society of Jesus, “but however great his personal qualities were, we did not think that the Church of the Armenians should be deprived of this pastor.” [*La Syrie et la Terre Sainte*, Paris 1862: 44]

Another colleague of Fr. Besson, Fr. Guillaume Godet, was fluent in Arabic, Syriac and Armenian. Fr. Godet brought into the Catholic Church an Armenian bishop who went on to die a holy death. [Besson, *La Syrie et la Terre Sainte*, 53]

Galanus also gave the names [but not the patriarchal dates] of some Armenian patriarchs of Constantinople who were Catholic, including John the Deaf, Zacharias and Cyriacus. [*Conciliatio Ecclesiae Armenae cum Romana*, Rome 1650, *Catalogue of Armenian Patriarchs*, unpaginated].

In 1641, Cyriacus wrote a letter from Constantinople to Pope Urban VIII, addressing him thus:

...constituted by the most high God as ruler of His house, the great and universal Church... you sit in this world as Christ sits on the throne of His glory, as judge, and merciful and a kind lover of men... and therefore have you been strengthened to hold the church of the first-born in your hand... O head of the holy church... if you deign to grant your blessing and response to my lowliness, I am ever prepared to do whatever you command without delay, in honor of my lord... [Tr. Azarian, 123–4]

In the modern era certain patriarchs of Cilicia also professed union with Rome, for example Khach’atur [1560–1584], Azarias [1584–1602], and John II [1718–1727]. Khach’atur wrote a letter in 1575 to Pope Gregory XIII [1572–1585], the original of which was preserved in the Vatican library. The letter included these comments:

To our holy father, pope of Rome, elected as a brave and valiant head of the holy faith. You are the locum tenens of the holy leaders and apostles Peter and Paul... We are imploring God's merciful and sweet grace that you may remain the unquenchable torch... [you are] the picture drawn by the Eternal Creator; through your words you accumulate all spiritual gifts... a fountain always flowing and inebriating the people... the ray that takes its light from the sun, and burns with its lights... the unquenchable torch that dissipates darkness. [Vatican Library Armenian Codex 2: p. 54]

In 1585, Azarias wrote a letter to Pope Gregory XIII, also preserved in the Vatican library, which calls the pope the "Ruler of all Catholicoi" or supreme patriarchs, and explained why some of Azarias' predecessors had been unable to come to Rome:

To His Holy Beatitude, the Father of the Patriarchs and Ruler of all Catholicoi, our master Lord Gregory, by the mercy of God, Pope of Rome... to you, most distinguished head of the honorable faith of the glorious Peter the Rock, you the brave and courageous [and] highly exalted supreme overseer of the Apostolic and Holy See, Gregorios, holy pope, chief minister and administrator of his coequal, alike, conformable and exemplary canon-law, distributor of the unique fortunes... Let Your Holiness know that it has been a year since our beloved brother, Don Leonardo, Bishop of Sidon, nuncio of Your Holiness, came to the city of Sis with a letter by Your Beatitude to Catholicos Khach'atour, my superior of pious memory, whose vicar general and helper I was. I had made an oath to come personally to bow down to Saints Peter and Paul and to pay our obligatory obeisance in the name of this our Catholicosate to the Apostolic See and to Your Holiness, Blessed Father, as we ought to have done already. However, because of the death of the named

Catholicos and the calamities and duties that fell upon us, compelling me to assume the Catholicosate unwillingly, I was unable to fulfill my promise. Moreover, I was fearful of other great temptations if I were to leave my residence. Thus I am impelled to choose and to send in my place, with my written affidavit, my brother vardapet, Bishop John, a man of understanding, a preacher well known for his piety in the ascetic life. With him bearing this letter by me, the feeble one, we bow down before Your Great See, at the sacred feet of Your Beatitude, with all obedience and humility, honoring the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of Rome, in my name and that of all the bishops and priests and my people. And we request your holy, Apostolic blessing and the confirmation of our Catholicosate and the Catholicosal vestments and all favors that had been decreed for our predecessors, the other Catholicoi. Let not Your Holiness be surprised that several of our predecessors were unable to fulfill this debt, and this holy and good rule of honoring the Holy See of Rome, professing her as mother and teacher. They were often unable to do so because of wars and geographical distance... [Vatican Library Armenian Codex 2: p. 32–33, translated by Dr. Abraham Terian]

In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, numerous Armenian prelates offered their submission to the Roman Pontiff. Finally, in the early 1740s Abraham Arzivian, Armenian archbishop of Aleppo, was elected by Armenian Catholics in Syria, and confirmed as the Armenian Catholic patriarch by Pope Benedict XIV. As a sign of his devotion to the Holy See, the new patriarch took the name Abraham Peter I.

The appointment of Arzivian began a line of Armenian Catholic patriarchs which has lasted to this very day; Abraham's successors continued the custom of adding the name Peter to their patriarchal name. Armenian Catholics, with their heavenly liturgy and unique customs and ancient rites, continue to be one of the noblest branches of the Catholic Church, and the children of Armenia have included some of the most loyal sons and daughters

of Christendom.

The keys over the Armenians, if we may put it so, are not the keys of domination or colonization, but of liberation, of reconciliation. They are the same keys which the Incarnate Word entrusted to Simon Peter, almost twenty centuries ago.

Appendix. St. Peter in Armenian Tradition

The Armenian ritual, or *Mastotz*, has the following prayer for blessing the foundation stone of a church: “O Lord our God, who after the name of the chief of thy holy apostles, Peter, named the Rock, didst in like wise name thy holy Church, the Rock...” [Conybeare, F.C. *Rituale Armenorum*, Oxford 1905, p. 7]

The Armenian hymnal, or *Sharakan*, in the “Canon of the Chief Apostles, Peter and Paul,” calls St. Peter “Rock indestructible to the gates of hell,” “highest in the ranks of the apostles, head of the holy faith, foundation of the Church.” The canon also has it that God “chose the Blessed Apostles as a ‘pair’ of faith, pillars of the Church, having granted them a Throne of Judgment [in the entire world].” [Tr. P. Martin]

The canon and hymns for Good Friday call Peter the “head of the chosen band,” and “Rock of faith,” including the passage, “You forgave the Rock of the Church, and preserved him from ruin, and restored him from his fall for the tears of his heart...” [*Sharakan*, computer disk translation by J. Doyle]

Like the Greek Church, the Armenian Church commemorated the chains of St. Peter on January 16, or 9 Aratz in the Armenian calendar. The Synaxarion of Catholicos Gregory VII of Anawarza [c. 1300] calls Peter “head of the apostles, rock of the Church.” [PO 15: 46]

Another version of the Armenian Synaxarion, or *Yaysmavurk*, contains a feast of Saints Peter and Paul on December 27. The texts say:

The foremost and great apostles of Christ, Peter along with Paul, preached the gospel of Christ in many places. They appointed priests, built churches and established rules and canons for believers in the Lord Christ... the great Peter, the rock of faith, went about from east to west, with many disciples in the faith of Christ; and they named the believers “Christians.” Later they came and met in the great Rome... Peter was crucified in the likeness of Christ, who had told him “Follow me.” But Peter said to those who were to crucify him, “I am not worthy to resemble my Lord in death.” And Paul was beheaded with the sword. And their holy bodies were interred in the great city of Rome for the world to take pride in and for intercession on behalf of all believers. Now let it be known that they were perfected on June 29. [After some remarks critical of the Council of Chalcedon, the text continues:] ...the rock of faith, the holy apostle Peter... confessed that the Son is of the nature of the Father. This Peter, who was pronounced blessed by Christ and was guarantor of the grace of blessedness; This Peter, who was named Rock and was set for the foundation of the Church; Peter, who received power from Christ not to be overcome by the gates of hell; Peter, who through tears of repentance did not lose the Spirit of apostleship and did not fall out of the foundation of the Church; Peter, who for his love for the Master was entrusted with feeding His flock; Peter the wise architect and builder without material whose hands laid a foundation for the Eye of the universe in *Antioch of the Syrians and in the Great Rome of the Latins*... [Peter] was pronounced blessed by Christ, was set as the foundation of the Church and received the [emblem] of the Kingdom. He was established as the head of the holy apostles, to be their commander in lieu of Christ... [*Yaysmavurk*, Constantinople 1730, 358–60, tr. Prof. Abraham Terian]

The *Yaysmavurk* also commemorates Ss. Peter and Paul on June 29, along with a description of St. Peter’s death in Rome, under Nero:

The great apostle of Christ, St. Peter, the rock of faith and the foundation of the church, came from Jerusalem to preach on earth. He went to Cappadocia, Galatia, Phrygia, Bithynia, Pontus, and Asia, and then to Rome with Paul... Nero was... bent to do evil and was threatening Peter... When they seized him, he gave Rome's episcopal robe, which was made of the burial clothes of Christ [sic], to his disciple... When they reached the execution place and wanted to lift him on the cross, Peter pleaded [with] the executioner not to crucify him like that, but contrariwise, head down. And they crucified him like that... A certain man... a believer in the Lord, lowered Peter from the cross and anointed his body with fragrant oils and incense, wrapped it in clean clothes and placed in a sarcophagus the Rock of faith... [Yaysmavurk, 882-3, tr. Prof. A. Terian]

An Armenian liturgical hymnal called *Dararan* includes this passage: "Peter and Paul, glory of Christians, great is your feast day today in the city of Rome... of whom one of you was placed as the cornerstone of the Church; the other built men over [it]..." [*Dararan*, Constantinople 1738, 245-6; tr. Paulin Martin]

St. Peter and Armenian Theologians

Armenian manuscripts of Agathangelus contain a Catechism attributed to St. Gregory the Illuminator, which was recently translated by R. W. Thomson under the title, *The Teaching of St. Gregory*. The catechism relates that "when the true disciples were gathered around the true teacher... He asked them... 'Whom do you say that I am?' Their leader Peter said, 'You are Christ, Son of the living God.' For this reason he received the blessing: 'Blessed are you Peter, son of Jona, because not from your earthly relations, from the flesh and blood of your race, from mankind, did you receive this knowledge, but the Father gave it into your heart from heaven and revealed it to you.' And He made him the rock of establishment of all the churches." [Revised ed. St. Nersess Seminary 2001: 141]

In the early fifth century Isaac, Catholicos of Armenia, discoursed on the necessity of avoiding schism, and adhering to the unity of the Catholic, apostolic church. Cardinal Mai published a Latin translation of Isaac's second sermon, which associated the concepts 'Peter,' 'Rock,' and 'Church':

...the divine word, when it points out to us the Church, does not mean the one built out of stones and wood, but the congregation of men built upon a firm rock through faith... the Life-giver himself teaches us the same thing when he says to Peter: 'Thou art rock, and upon this rock I shall build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against thee.' What, then, are we to understand when we hear Peter being called a rock— is he like any rock? No, but as a man endowed with reason, prince of the apostolic choir. Because he, with unshaken faith, confessed Christ the Son of God, he acquired blessedness and was called a rock. [*Scriptorum Veterum Nova Collectio*, Rome 1838, 10: 2: 281]

Another Armenian theologian, Eznik of Kolb [c. 445], in *De Deo or Refutation of Sects*, calls St. Peter the head or chief of the apostles. [PO 28: 671]

The fifth century Armenian homilist Elishe remarked in his sermons about St. Peter:

What do you say, my lord Peter? You sit at the lakeshore and you worry about the sea and you prepare your boat. "Let us go," you say, "let us catch fish." Do you see that by saying that you urge the same to the other apostles, and they must follow you? For where the mind wills, there the feet lead. And the mind is the head, and you are the head of the disciples... because the flock is one and the shepherd is one, and one are the pastures and one the sheepfold of repose for them all, the lambs and sheep and the whole multitude...

are there, especially those same apostles whom [Christ] entrusted to Peter... [*Matenagrut'iwnk'*, Venice 1859: 329, 352, tr. R. Thomson, *A Homily on the Passion of Christ Attributed to Elishe*, Louvain 2000: 140-1, 170-1]

In his homily *On the Preaching of the Apostles*, Elishe mentions that St. Peter founded the Roman Church, adding:

Then Peter also, the chief of the apostles, in that same city [Rome] received sentence of death in the likeness of Christ's cross. He placed a firm rock as foundation of the church and fulfilled the word of the Lord, who said: "You are a rock, and on this rock I shall build my church." He was indeed a rock of the true tradition of the faith. Just as Peter built himself for Christ through the testimony of death, so was the church built on Peter's faith, not only in Rome but also throughout all cities and villages... Just as Peter established the church in Rome, likewise the other apostles according to each one's allotted lands... [R. Thomson, ed., *A Homily on the Passion of Christ Attributed to Elishe*, Louvain 2000: 165]

Late in the fifth century, in a discourse to the Armenians recorded by the historian Lazarus of Pharb, Patriarch John Mantaguni referred to Peter as "doorkeeper and key-bearer of heaven." [Langlois, 2: 367]

John VI [897-925], patriarch of Armenia, calls St. Peter the "head" of the apostles. [*Histoire d'Arménie par le Patriarche Jean VI dit Jean Catholikos*, Paris 1841, 343]

A tenth century Armenian bishop, Khosrov Andzewatsi, made these remarks about St. Peter in his *Commentary on the Order of Public Prayer*.

Peter, the head of the apostles, found prayer to be truly medicine and healing for his three denials... Peter was not only restored after the fall of the denial, but also was duly

made head of the apostles, foundation of the church, and keeper of the kingdom... What sort of a man was Peter, head of the apostles, keeper of the kingdom of heaven? Who did not receive from men or from angels the knowledge about the Son, but from the Father of light, and who truly became worthy of blessedness by Christ. He was able to say boldly: "We left everything and followed you." And in return he received the seat of judgment and was also named Rock by the Lord, and was established as the foundation of the Church... [*Meknut'iwn zhamakargut'ean*, Constantinople 1840: 73, 217, 225, tr. Dr. Abraham Terian]

Among later theologians, Gregory of Narek calls St. Peter "the Rock," and "Rock of faith." [*Livre de Prieres*, tr. Isaac Kechichian, Paris 1961: 106, 309, 368]

In the eleventh century, Prince Gregory Magistros mentions in one of his letters that Peter, "rock of faith at the foundation of the apostles and the prophets," was crucified upside down. [Ed. K. Kostaneants, *Grigor Magistrosi t'ght'ere*, Alexandropol 1910: 191]

St. Nerses Shnorhali, in the poem *Jesus, Only Son of the Father*, calls Peter "the Rock," and "immovable rock of the holy faith." [Tr. Isaac Kechichian. *Jesus, Fils Unique du Pere*, ed. Cerf 1973: 138, 196]

Another Armenian theologian, Sargis Snorhali, commented on the Epistles of St. Peter. In the Preface of his commentary, Sargis wrote:

I speak of Peter... who was named a Rock, and placed in the foundation of the Church... who became opener of the gates of heaven... of Peter, who preached the gospel in Jerusalem, Samaria, Palestine, Antioch, the Mediterranean countries, in Rome... who was buried in a beautiful palatial place of the Romans... [*Commentary on the Catholic Epistles*, Constantinople 1744, 503-4, tr. Prof. A. Terian]

Commenting on the opening of I Peter: “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,” Sargis wrote:

A different name had been given to him by his family, namely Simon. But when the eye of Jesus, which sees all things, observed the solidity of his faith, which in no way yielded to adversities, and his unwavering mind persisting in the good, He also changed his name according to the solidity of his faith. For when Jesus saw him coming to Him, He said: “Thou art Simon, the son of Jonah; thou shalt be called Cephas, which is interpreted Peter.” Have you seen the lordly honor conferred [on] this good and wise servant? Nobody existing in the flesh, and passing state of our nature ever obtained it, none of the just or holy Prophets, or disciples of the Gospel, but this blessed one. [*Commentary on the Catholic Epistles*, Constantinople 1744, 228, tr. Prof. A. Terian]

Commenting on the opening of Peter’s Second Epistle, Sargis wrote:

Our Lord honored the Blessed Peter, changing his name according to the likeness of the ancient Abraham and Jacob, so as to make him the father of many nations like Abraham, or rather more excellent and divine than he. For [Abraham], being mortal, was the father of a mortal generation, and therefore when his name was changed it received an additional letter. [Peter], on the other hand, because he was going to become the Father, Head and Leader of a spiritual generation, received a complete name change: [Jesus] naming Simon Peter, which is interpreted Rock, and promises to build upon that very rock His Church, which is superior to all adversities of temptation, which are the gates of hell. [*Commentary on the Catholic Epistles*, Constantinople 1744, 510–11, tr. Prof. A. Terian]

At the end of his commentary on First Peter, Sargis wrote:

I pray thee, O father, honored head, guide, apostle and overseer of the New Covenant and People, to commend the entire plenitude of the Church to our Lord, the Word, so that she may stand upon the firmament of thy profession and confession with unshaken firmness. [*Commentary on the Catholic Epistles*, Constantinople 1744, 507, tr. Prof. A. Terian]

A passage from a liturgical commentary of St. Nerses of Lambron says:

We have acknowledged thee, O Peter, as the second from Christ; unto us, who are his disciples, thou hast sat as the Head after the Head: He made thee a Rock of firmness for us all, the foundation of this temple: once He received thy pledge of love, He entrusted the lambs and the sheep into thy hands, to be fed... [*Reflections on Ecclesiastical Orders and Commentary on the Mystery of the Mass*, Venice 1847: 520]

Another Armenian theologian, John Tsortsoretsi [1260–1335], commenting on the Gospel of Matthew wrote:

Although all [the apostles] were heads, [Christ] makes Peter their head, and not only theirs, but He also chose him as pastor of the lambs, sheep and rams... he could have been first both in order and in power, because he was both—in order, because of his advanced age, and in power, because of his fervent love and warm faith. [*Commentary on Matthew*, Constantinople 1825, 233] See now the Lord's power...! He made a fisherman harder and firmer than all rocks. For even if the whole world were to rise up against [him], it would not be able to overcome [him]. [*Commentary on Matthew*, Constantinople 1825, 348–9, tr. Prof. A. Terian]

Among theologians who clashed with the Dominican missionaries, Gregory of Tat'ew' [1346–1409] noted in one sermon:

Peter is the light governing the day because he has authority on all us believers in Christ; therefore Peter is the sun, and Paul is the moon.” [*Girk’ k’arozut’ean or koch’l amaran hator*, Constantinople 1741: 682]

The See of Rome and Armenian Sources

The *Yaysmavurk*, or Synaxarion for May 24 describes how a certain man had been excommunicated by a priest, and was moved to repentance after the priest’s death, asking for absolution. As he went from monastery to monastery, consulting the more learned Armenian teachers, he received this advice:

“There is no treatment for your health, for your unbearable wounds, but to go to Rome, where those who open and shut the Kingdom of Heaven are, the holy apostles Peter and Paul and those who open and shut in heaven and on earth. They are able to discover a remedy for your wounds.” And he, without hesitation, hastened to go, deeming the distance as nothing. And succeeding with God’s help, he reached great Rome. And meeting the holy patriarch he fell before him and recounted his transgressions and the reason for his coming there. And the holy patriarch summoned all the clergy together and said to them: “This man has come to us from the East, from the Armenian people, with much entreaties and firm faith. Come let us ask the Lord our God and the holy apostles, that they may open to him the door of God’s mercy and deliver him from the bonds of his priest.” [*Yaysmavurk*, 769, tr. by Prof. Abraham Terian]

The account goes on to describe how the man miraculously received forgiveness through the intercession of Saints Peter and Paul, adding:

As the patriarch and the multitude... saw the man released [from the bonds of sin], they blessed God with joy and

glorified the holy apostles who did not overlook their entreaties. After the wonders had taken place, the man asked the holy patriarch to grant him permission to serve the church. They gave him the key and he served the holy apostles for seven years, and he never departed from that sanctuary from dawn to dusk, working endlessly and praying without ceasing. It then occurred to the man to return to the East to his home and family. And the Pope gave him permission to return. [*Yaysmavurk*, 770, tr. Prof. A. Terian]

This account is remarkably similar to an anecdote recorded in a tenth century Georgian manuscript, Codex 9 of Iviron. The account, which appeared in an appendix to the Georgian version of the *Spiritual Meadow* of John Moschus, was also recorded in Greek and an older Arabic version. A deacon from Asia Minor quarrelled with his priest, who excommunicated him and died somewhat later. Another priest, seconded by the local bishop, declared that only the one who had excommunicated the deacon could absolve him. But how could anybody be absolved by a *dead priest*? The poor deacon had recourse to the metropolitan, who referred him to the bishop of Constantinople, who referred the deacon in turn to “the Pope of Rome, who is head of all the Churches of God, thanks to the apostle Peter, who received from Christ God authority to bind and loose.” At Rome, the account continues, the deacon was told to see the archbishop of Jerusalem, who sent him to see the Fathers of the Desert. After three days of prayer, the account concludes, an old ascetic obtained an apparition of the deceased priest, who finally absolved the deacon. [*Byzantion*, 36 (1966–1967), 396 sq.]

A similar account from the *Lives of the Fathers* describes how two monks had mutilated themselves and were excommunicated by their bishop. The account continues:

Their archbishop, hearing of what they had done, excommunicated them, but they, thinking that they had done well, were indignant at him, saying: “We have castrated ourselves for the kingdom of heaven, and he has

excommunicated us? Let us go and appeal against him to the archbishop of Jerusalem.” They therefore went away and told him about everything. And the archbishop of Jerusalem said to them: “I too excommunicate you.” At this they were saddened again, and went away to Antioch, to the archbishop, and they told him everything that had been done to them. And he similarly excommunicated them. And they said to themselves: let us go to Rome, to the patriarch, and he will vindicate us against them all. *They went away therefore to the supreme archbishop of the city of Rome*, and told him everything that the other archbishops had done to them, saying: “*We have come to you, because you are the head of them all.*” [PL 73: 968-9]

The hapless brothers were excommunicated by the pope as well, but finally they turned to St. Epiphanius, of Cyprus, who procured their reconciliation with their own patriarch. About a century ago, F. Nau published the Greek version of this account. [*Revue de l’Orient Chretien* 17 (1912), 210-11]

Recently L. Leloir translated an Armenian version of the *Lives of the Fathers* called *Paterica Armeniaca*. Leloir’s translation of this passage reads:

The archbishop of Alexandria heard of what they had done, and excluded them from participation in the sacred mystery. Now they were saddened at this, and said: “We have made ourselves eunuchs for the kingdom of God, and they prohibited us from participating [in the eucharist]; and now, let us go and tell this to the patriarch of Jerusalem.” And going away, they told him about everything. The patriarch of Jerusalem said to them: “I too separate you from participation [in the eucharist].” Now they were exceedingly sad about this, and said: “let us go to the patriarch of Antioch, and tell him.” And they went and told him everything that had happened. And he said, “I too prohibit you from the sacred mystery.” Then they said to each other: “Let us go to

the Pope of Rome, and he will justify us in this matter.” And when they went away to the Pope of Rome, they told him also about all this, and said: “They did this to us, *and for this reason we have come to you, that you may do us justice, for you are the master and head of them all.*” [CSCO 371 (Subs. 47), 247-8]

Armenian writers also speak of the apostolic origin of the Roman church and her role in evangelization. Moses of Khoren, in a homily on the ancient martyr St. Rhipsime, proclaimed:

Make the voice of good news resound in the west; sound the trumpet in Rome: rejoice and be glad, universal capital that sits in the west, crowned with a light kindled by the holy apostles, with rays spread throughout the world... Rejoice and be glad, Church of the Romans, Mother of Rhipsime and spouse of the immortal bridegroom, apostolic bride, since the wings of thy gospel have flown from thee towards the east... [*Movsesi Khorenat'woy matenagrut'iwnk'*, Venice 1865: 315]

The Synaxarion of Patriarch Gregory VII of Anawarza [c. 1300] commemorates various popes. An entry for Pope Damasus [366-384], on 3 Kalotz or December 11, reads:

Commemoration of St. Damasus, patriarch of Rome and great doctor. St. Damasus, justly called to the Apostolic See by the choice of the Holy Spirit, being 42nd [sic] after St. Peter, was endowed with the most perfect qualities. He was gentle like Moses, pure like John, learned and versed in the [holy] books like Blessed Paul, a wonder-worker, distinguished, an immovable and unshakeable rock of catholicity against all the heretical sects in the image of the great Peter... He was so respected and venerated by all for his heavenly conduct and his word full of wisdom, that the enemies themselves feared him and trembled before him... He presided over the

second council of 150 bishops at Constantinople, and refuted the new heresy of Macedonius, who blasphemed against the Holy Spirit. He professed with firmness the true consubstantial divinity of the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son, in accord with the other holy Fathers, among whom he shone like the sun in his time. He sat for eighteen years... and rested in Christ. [PO 18: 22–3]

On 5 Areg or March 13, the Synaxarion also commemorates Pope Gregory the Great [590–604], noting that he became, by divine providence, “on the see of Peter, patriarch of Rome.” [PO 21: 160]

On 12 Ahekan or April 19, the Synaxarion includes this notice in honor of Pope Agapetus [535–536], who went to Constantinople and deposed the heretical patriarch, Anthimus:

On this day the life of Agapius, pontiff of Rome. This great and marvelous person Agapius [Agapetus] was from the city of Rome in the time of... Justinian. By his virtuous life he pleased God, and in addition to the many miracles he worked, he was zealous for the orthodox faith and observed God’s commandments scrupulously. He showed that he was worthy to sit on the apostolic throne of Rome.

When he reached the city [of Constantinople], the emperor, princes and all the people welcomed him with great joy. There he found Anthimus, bishop of Trebizond, who was of the schism of Eutyches and Severus [of Antioch], who was propagandizing for his sect... causing great harm among the churches of the city.

Blessed Agapius, by his divine doctrine, ruined him completely and bound him with anathemas, as well as Peter, bishop of Apamea, Severus, bishop of Antioch, and all adherents of the evil schism. Then, guided by God in his choice, and with the consent of the emperor, princes and

people, he consecrated the priest Menas, a pious God-fearing orthodox man, as patriarch of Constantinople. [PO 21: 320-22]

On 16 Meheki or February 22, the Synaxarion commemorates “the enthronement of the apostle Peter on the throne of Antioch,” noting that after seven years at Antioch, St. Peter “left Evodius in his place as patriarch of Antioch, and from there went to Rome, where he settled as pope for twenty years.” The Synaxarion adds that at that era, the Armenian church had two other feasts in honor of the “head of the apostles”—one in honor of his chains, and the other commemorating his martyrdom. [PO 21: 81-2]

Mkhithar of Airivank was an Armenian vardapet, or doctor, who was contemporary with Patriarch Gregory VII, writing about 1300. Unlike Gregory VII, Mkhithar was critical of the Council of Chalcedon. In his “Chronological History,” Mkhithar provides lists of emperors and patriarchs, including a list of “Popes of Rome,” which begins: Peter, Linus, Anicetus [Anacletus], Clement... [M. Brosset, ed., *Histoire Chronologique par Mkhithar d’Airivank*, St. Petersburg 1869, 20]

An appendix to the *Chronicle of the Kingdom of Lesser Armenia* by Constable Sempad notes: “The see of Rome is [founded on] the rock of St. Peter. It was to Peter that the Lord gave the keys of the kingdom of heaven, telling him: “Whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” [Dulaurier, DA 1: 676]

Relations with Rome Renewed

In the early eighteenth century, the Armenian Catholic priest Step’hannos Roshk’a composed a book of ecclesiastical annals entitled, *Zamanakagrut’iwn kam tarekank’ekeghets’akank*. These annals recorded many instances in which Armenian patriarchs and dignitaries had renewed contacts with Rome or written letters acknowledging the Roman primacy. Fr. Roshk’a had copies of some of the letters. The renewed contacts with Rome

included the following:

1607. Catholicos David of Etchmiadzin wrote to Rome, and over the years continued to send a representative to Rome. [*Zamanakagrut'iwn kam tarekank' ekeghets'akank*, 170-171]

1642. Archbishops John of Diarbekir and John of Edessa wrote to Rome. [*Zamanakagrut'iwn kam tarekank' ekeghets'akank*, 177]

1643. The celibate priest Thomas wrote to Rome. [*Zamanakagrut'iwn kam tarekank' ekeghets'akank*, 177]

1643. Patriarch John the Deaf, Bishop Paul of Divrig and two vardapets wrote to Pope Urban VIII [1623-1644]. [*Zamanakagrut'iwn kam tarekank' ekeghets'akank*, 177]

1647. Catholicos Philip of Etchmiadzin wrote to Pope Innocent X [1644-1655]. [*Zamanakagrut'iwn kam tarekank' ekeghets'akank*, 177]

1664. Catholicos Xacatur of Sis wrote to Pope Alexander VII [1655-1667]. [*Zamanakagrut'iwn kam tarekank' ekeghets'akank*, 180]

1682. Isahak, Vardapet of Maku, wrote to Pope Innocent XI [1676-1689]. [*Zamanakagrut'iwn kam tarekank' ekeghets'akank*, 185]

1688. Azarias, Catholicos of Caucasian Albania, wrote to Pope Innocent XI. [*Zamanakagrut'iwn kam tarekank' ekeghets'akank*, 186]

1695. Simeon, Catholicos of Caucasian Albania, with jurisdiction over the cities and counties of Shamakh, Ganja, Shirvan and Kharabagh, wrote a letter submitting himself to Pope Innocent XII [1691-1700]. The letter was translated by Fr. Stephannos Roshk'a. Vlas Vardapet, bishop of Shamakh, wrote a letter of submission and obedience to the same pope, which was also translated by Fr. Roshk'a. Nahapet, Catholicos of Echmiadzin, wrote to Pope Innocent, accepting him as universal leader of the leaders of those who follow Christ, and especially of the Armenian people. Nahapet

asked the pope to have tutelage over the Armenians. Fr. Roshk'a possessed a copy of this letter. [*Zamanakagrut'iwn kam tarekank' ekeghets'akank*, 188]

1699. Minas, Patriarch of Jerusalem, wrote to Pope Innocent XII from Istanbul, saying: "We accept the leader of Rome as the true successor of the apostle Peter, head of the apostles, as the head of all believers, the supreme judge in the holy Church, and the universal teacher in the church of Christ..." [*Zamanakagrut'iwn kam tarekank' ekeghets'akank*, 190]

1709. Alexander of Julfa, Catholicos of Etchmiadzin, wrote to Pope Clement XI [1700-1721], calling him the locumtenens of Jesus Christ and successor of the apostle Peter [who has the supremacy] over all Christians. [*Zamanakagrut'iwn kam tarekank' ekeghets'akank*, 194]

1712. Isaiah, Catholicos of Caucasian Albania, wrote to Pope Clement XI, sending testimony of the patriarch's adherence to the true faith. [*Zamanakagrut'iwn kam tarekank' ekeghets'akank*, 197]

1717. Astuatsatur of Hamadan, Catholicos of Etchmiadzin, wrote offering his submission to the pope, and praising the church of Rome. [*Zamanakagrut'iwn kam tarekank' ekeghets'akank*, 198]

In the nineteenth century, Stephen Azarian, an Armenian Catholic priest, researched the archives of the Propaganda, the Roman congregation once entrusted with missions in the east. Azarian discovered other letters and acts of Armenian bishops recognizing the Roman primacy, including the following:

1678. Jeremias, Catholicos of Caucasian Albania, wrote a letter to Rome signed by 12 bishops. **1689.** Thomas Nurigian, bishop of Holy Cross in Greater Armenia, followed suit. **1691.** A bishop named Cyriacus came to Rome to ask for a coadjutor for Azarias, patriarch of Sis. **1695.** Aristakis, an Armenian archbishop in Mesopotamia, wrote a letter acknowledging the Roman primacy. **1696.** Gregory, Catholicos of Sis, wrote a comparable letter. **1698.** James,

bishop of Marasch, wrote to acknowledge the Roman primacy. **1700.** Mkhithar, patriarch of Constantinople, wrote to acknowledge the Roman primacy. **1702.** Joachim, a bishop sent by Alexander, patriarch of Etchmiadzin, came to Rome to offer obedience in the name of his patriarch. About this time Vartan, bishop of Caesaria, John Kevorkian, bishop of Kafa and Gregory, bishop of Edessa, also offered their obedience to Rome. **1711.** Archbishop Jeremias of Egypt and Jonas, bishop of Sebaste, wrote letters of obedience to the pope. **1721.** Another Armenian prelate, Minas, wrote to the pope acknowledging the primacy. **1723.** Gabriel Vartanian, archbishop of Edessa, made a Catholic profession of faith at Rome, and acknowledged the Roman primacy. **1725.** Paschal, bishop of Cyprus and Archbishop Siukias Kasavetian sent letters of obedience to Pope Benedict XIII [1724-1730]. **1727.** Karapet, Catholicos of Etchmiadzin, sent a Catholic profession of faith to Pope Benedict XIII. [*Ecclesiae Armenae Traditio de Romani Pontificis Primatu Jurisdictionis et Inerrabili Magisterio*, Rome 1870, 136-8]

James IV [1655-1680], Catholicos of Etchmiadzin, wrote a profession of faith on his deathbed, the original of which was preserved in the library of the Mekhitarist congregation at Vienna. Among other things, James wrote:

...I believe and profess that the greatest, the apostolic and universal holy Roman Church enjoys full, supreme and perfect power and dominion over the universal Catholic Church. I also believe that the Supreme Head of this holy Church of Christ is the Vicar and successor of Peter, Prince of the Apostles, who binds and looses in heaven and on earth. I believe that whatever he binds or looses on earth is bound or loosed in heaven. This holy, Roman, apostolic, universal and greatest of churches I venerate and embrace, and I obediently subscribe to its doctrine in this life and the life

to come. I reject and anathematize the enemies and adversaries of this holy, apostolic Roman church and its faith, in the present world and the world to come. [Armenian text in Balgian, *Patmut'iwn kat'oghike vardapetut'ean i Hays*, Vienna 1878, 163–4]

Another letter of James written in 1673, preserved in the Propaganda archives, calls Pope Clement X [1670–1676] the “supreme head of the universal and apostolic and Catholic Church, and worthy heir and viceregent of the more sublime and holy and principal see of the apostles Peter and Paul...” [Tr. in Azarian, 128]

In 1685 an Armenian bishop named Isaac, a sort of locumtenens of the patriarch of Etchmiadzin, wrote a letter to the pope, the original of which is contained in the archives of the Propaganda, which contains these expressions:

I kiss the soles of the feet of the most holy father, supreme pontiff of all... most glorious crown placed upon the head of the head of the holy and Catholic Church, inextinguishable torch... illuminator of the universe with the rays of truth, pillar of the firmness of faith... head of the church... we anxiously await the visitation of the Lord that we may enjoy the favors which are poured out by the supreme head of the majesty of the most holy and spiritual common father of Christendom... [Tr. in Azarian, 129]

Late in the seventeenth century Nahapet, patriarch of Etchmiadzin, wrote more than one letter acknowledging the Roman primacy. One letter, preserved among the manuscripts of the Armenian Catholic Mekhitarist congregation at Venice, included these lines addressed to Pope Innocent XII [1691–1700] in 1699:

...thrice blessed holy father and superexalted head of the universal church of Christ, Innocent XII, most holy pope... again we call the Roman Church our mother, which we

have always professed to be such... For we profess the sacred apostle Peter as vicar over all his Church, pastor of the sheep and lambs of Jesus, rock of the holy Church, head of the holy apostles and their prince, the Rock that cannot be harmed by the gates of hell, holder of the keys of the kingdom of heaven. We also profess the supreme bishop of Rome, the sacred successor of Peter the Rock and head of all the faithful, and archbishop of all the bishops and universal doctor of the entire church of Christ. We also profess that the holy Roman Church is mother of all the churches, whom we are conscious that we must obey, and we admit whatever the Roman Church admits and reject whatever she rejects... [Tr. in Azarian, 131-2]

In 1701 another Armenian patriarch, Melchisedech, wrote a letter to Pope Clement XI [1700-1721], the original of which was preserved in the archives of the Propaganda, addressing him as follows:

...my supreme master... my most holy father, O Rock of faith like Peter... to whom it was said by the Word of God: thou art Peter, and an unshaken rock, Pastor, and good shepherd of all shepherds... incorruptible pope... supreme and most holy governor... I believe that you are the supreme pontiff, and that I am [of the] flock of the prince of pastors which you are, for you are the Peter of [our] entire nation... [Tr. in Azarian, 134-5]

In the same year another Armenian patriarch, Nahapet, wrote a letter to Pope Clement XI also preserved in the archives of the Propaganda, a letter that called the Roman Church “mother of the light,” and included these expressions as well:

To the supreme leader of priests and principal head of the universal church of Christ spread throughout the world, successor, locumtenens and heir of the principal apostle, Peter, who is the rock of faith, lord Clement XI, head [and] leader

of the universal church of Christ... [Tr. in Azarian, 135]

Note on sources. Many letters of the Armenian patriarchs to the Roman pontiffs have never been published in full, and are available only in excerpts presented in the apologetical works of Step'hannos Roshk'a, Alexander Balgian and Stephen Azarian. For our information about unpublished or untranslated Armenian sources in general, we are indebted to Father Krikor Maksoudian and Dr. Abraham Terian. Fr. Maksoudian is director of the Clara and Zohrab information center, New York, and Dr. Terian is academic dean of St. Nersess Seminary, New Rochelle, New York. These Armenian scholars helped us with numerous translations and led us, whenever possible, to the primary sources in Armenian. We are also indebted to Armenian expert and doctoral candidate John Ahmaranian, who is presently pursuing his doctorate in Armenia.

Chapter XXII

The Primacy and the Syriac Churches

“Syriac churches” can be traced back to the earliest centuries after Christ, if not the apostolic age itself. The Acts of the Apostles tell us that “Parthians and Medes and Elamites and the dwellers in Mesopotamia” had been present at the first Pentecost, birthday of the Church, and as they made their way home full of wonder, they told their neighbors of good will about “the wonderful works of God.” [Acts 1, 9-11]

St. Peter was the first bishop of Antioch, “Queen of the East” and metropolis of the Roman civil diocese of *Oriens*, the East. The Decree of Damasus had ranked Antioch as the third see, after Rome and Alexandria. Severus of Antioch, the feisty monophysite patriarch [c. 515], called Antioch “the first see of the chief of the apostles.” [Ep. 69. PO 14: 97]

Origin of the Jacobites and Melkites

The patriarchate of Antioch became embroiled in monophysite controversies after the Council of Chalcedon, and in the sixth century, thanks to the protection of Empress Theodora, the monk Jacob Baradai procured episcopal consecration and went throughout the east, performing ordinations for the monophysites of Syria. Baradai, whose name, incidentally, means “rags,” may have performed thousands of ordinations; consequently the West Syrian monophysites are known as *Jacobites* after Jacob Baradai, who gave them their hierarchy.

A minority of Christians in the patriarchates of Antioch and Alexandria remained faithful to the Council of Chalcedon and the Tome of Leo. Because the Chalcedonian faith was the faith of the Byzantine Empire,

Christians faithful to Chalcedon received the epithet *Melkites*, meaning “imperialists” or “emperor’s men.”

The Maronite Patriarchate

Another division occurred in the patriarchate of Antioch in the wake of the sixth ecumenical council [680-681]. The disciples of the venerable hermit Maron had become prominent in Syria as early as the fifth century, and their influence had radiated from the monastic center of St. Maron. The monks of St. Maron were firm defenders of the Chalcedonian faith; in 518, they sent an urgent appeal to Pope Hormisdas [514-523], informing him of the massacre of *three hundred fifty monks*. The monks of St. Maron also subscribed to the acts of the Council of Constantinople under Patriarch Menas, in 536.

About 700, a separate Maronite patriarchate came into existence, claiming the title of the apostolic see of Antioch. Maronite historians have maintained that John Maron was elected patriarch of Antioch, with Roman approval, about 700. Melkites and other contemporary writers, however, believe that a separate Maronite patriarchate was formed because the Maronites were monothelites. In the late twelfth century, the Maronites allied themselves with the Crusaders and made a Catholic profession of faith.

In modern times, Maronites have been among the firmest bulwarks of Catholicism in the Near East. For example, in 1514 the Maronite patriarch, Peter, sent a letter to Pope Leo X [1513-1521] which contained these assurances of Maronite obedience:

to Leo, pope of Christians... our father and master who raises up our souls, vicar of the Father most high, holding the throne of Rome, our master Pope Leo Pope of Rome... ever obedient to our holy mother the Roman Church and the pope; moreover we observe and keep everything that our holy mother, the Roman Church has established. For her and for our blessed father [and] master the pope beloved to

God and who holds the place of God on earth, we always pray to our God and lord in the holy hours, and from our heart we love the holy see of the glorious Peter... [Maronites are] humble and obedient to our holy mother, the Roman Church, and our lord [and] father the pope and all his precepts... [Raynaldus, *ad annum* 1514, 88-92]

Two years later, the Maronite patriarch sent representatives to participate in the Fifth Lateran Council. The patriarchal letters called Pope Leo X “the most holy vicar of Christ, and our master... who on earth takes the place of Peter, the rock of truth, and sits upon the Apostolic See.” [Raynaldus, *ad annum* 1516, 7]

The same letters noted that the Maronites had sent an orator to the council, “to learn the institutions of the fathers and the dogmas of the holy Roman Church, and once they have been taught, return to us and teach others,” adding:

so that in our name and that of the entire Maronite clergy and people, on bended knee he might both venerate and kiss the most holy feet of your holiness, and before your brethren, the cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, he might grant obedience and swear fidelity, and with bowed head firmly insist that we are truly faithful servants of the holy Apostolic See and your holiness... [Raynaldus, *ad annum* 1516, 8]

Origin of East Syriac Christianity

Another branch of Syriac Christianity stemmed from the ancient Kingdom of Edessa, which seems to have been evangelized no later than the second century. A fourth century document, the *Doctrine of Addai*, which is considered at least partly apocryphal by the Catholic Church, tells the story of the conversion of Edessa.

The text presents Addai as one of the Seventy Two disciples, who

evangelizes the kingdom of Edessa and its ruler, Abgar. Addai converts the people, builds churches and ordains deacons and priests. Before his death, Addai consecrates a successor named Aggai and ordains a priest named Palut. Aggai continues ordaining holy priests, but is killed by a rebellious son of King Abgar. [Ed. G. Phillips. *The Doctrine of Addai the Apostle*, London 1876]

As a result of these events, Palut, future leader of the church, is left high and dry. To obtain episcopal consecration, Palut is obliged to go to Antioch, where he is consecrated by Serapion, bishop of Antioch. The narrative adds these comments, generally considered an interpolation:

[Serapion] himself also received the hand [of ordination] from Zephyrinus, Bishop of the city of Rome, from the succession of the hand of Simon Cephas, which he received from Our Lord, who was there Bishop of Rome twenty-five years, in the days of the Caesar [Nero], who reigned there thirteen years... [Phillips, *Doctrine of Addai*, 50]

The text contains obvious incongruities and anachronisms. Addai is presented as one of the original disciples of Christ, yet his successor Aggai ordains Palut, who in turn is consecrated by Serapion, bishop of Antioch [c. 191–212], who was allegedly ordained by Pope Zephyrinus [199–217]. Although the chronology clearly is untenable, this version of events seems to show a certain preoccupation with apostolic succession.

A similar comment, or interpolation, occurs in another ancient Syriac document, the *Martyrdom of Barsamya*, bishop of Edessa [c. 250]. Describing the martyred bishop Barsamya's place in the apostolic succession, this text remarks that "the hand of priesthood was received by this same Barsamya from Abshelama, who was bishop in Edessa; and Abshelama, the hand was received by him from Serapion, Bishop of Antioch; and Serapion, the hand was received by him from Zephyrinus, Bishop of Rome..." The text continues with the Roman bishops in descending order, and concludes, "Xystus received from Alexander, and Alexander received from Erastus [Evaristus], and Erastus received from Cletus, and Cletus received from

Anus [Linus], and Anus received from Simon Cephas, and Simon Cephas received from our Lord..." [J. Cureton, ed., *Ancient Syriac Documents*, 71]

Another Syriac document, the *Doctrine of Simon Cephas in the City of Rome*, mentions Peter's Roman episcopate. The text relates that Peter "ministered there in the office of Guide and Ruler twenty-five years. And after these years... he knew that [Nero] would crucify him, so he called Anus [Linus] the deacon, and made him Bishop in his own stead in Rome..." [Cureton, *Ancient Syriac Documents*, 40]

The Catholicos of Seleucia-Ctesiphon

From Edessa the Christian faith spread to East Syria and Persia, where a flourishing church sprang up under the primatial see of Seleucia-Ctesiphon. Originally the Catholicos, or primate, had to go to Antioch to be consecrated, which was extremely hazardous in times of persecution. East Syrian sources acknowledge that originally the Catholicos of Seleucia-Ctesiphon was under the "western fathers," the "four patriarchs" within the Roman empire. A Syriac document known as the "Synodical Letter of the Western Fathers" grants patriarchal status to the Catholicos of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, adding, "his throne follows the four patriarchs of the world, who hold the four thrones in accordance with the number of the Gospels..." Ironically, the letter is considered apocryphal by Catholic theologians, but was accepted by East Syrian theologians. Assemani offered a translation of the letter in *Bibliotheca Orientalis*. [Vol. 3: 52-55]

In 423, there was a crisis in the East Syrian Church. Frustrated by disobedience to his authority, Catholicos Dadishoo [422-457] resigned. The bishops, however, implored him to return to his see and resume direction of the flock, "which was entrusted to him in Christ, through the high priesthood he received like Peter, head of the apostles." At the synod of Markabta in 424, Agapetus, bishop of Beit Laphat, delivered a long speech and said:

...as the Father of truth is one... the Son has chosen only one faithful superintendent, Simon Bar Jonah, surnamed Peter,

to whom he made this promise: “Upon this rock I shall build my church,” and “I shall give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven,” but it was not said by Christ to all the disciples, “Upon you shall I build,” or “to you shall I give.” The gift of the priesthood was granted to all the apostles but the unique principality, that is, the spiritual paternity, was not given to all; and for only one true God, there is only one faithful steward, who is the head, director and procurator of his brethren... these things were defined by our ancient Fathers of the West, and were sent in writing to our ancient Fathers of the East... You are aware, Fathers, that whenever schism and discord have existed among us, the western Fathers have been the helpers and auxiliaries of this Paternity, to which all of us... are bound and attached as are members of the whole body to the head... And now that persecution and anguish have weighed so heavily upon us, time does not allow them to take care of us as before... Come, let us heal the wounds of our people and our clergy; let us expose ourselves to every sort of death for our Father and head, who is our director, our dispenser, distributor of all the riches of the divine treasures, Catholicos Mar Dadishoo, who is for us Peter, head of our ecclesiastical assembly... [J. Chabot, ed., *Synodicon Orientale*, 292–4]

The “Western Fathers” here are the patriarchs within the Roman Empire. After the speech of Agapetus, the bishops made some resolutions. Citing decrees that they attributed to the Western Fathers, they prohibited any more appeals over the head of their catholicos to the western patriarchs. Whatever cases could not be resolved by the catholicos, the bishops decreed, were “reserved to the tribunal of Christ.” [Chabot, *Synodicon Orientale*, 296]

The synod of Dadishoo revealed a tendency in the East Syrian church to treat the Catholicos of Seleucia-Ctesiphon as the heir of Peter’s primacy. Later in the fifth century, the East Syrian church embraced Nestorianism— or perhaps more precisely, it recognized the teaching of

Nestorius as concurring with that of its own masters, Diodorus of Tarsus and Theodore of Mopsuestia. After the East Syriac Church became Nestorian, the tendency to treat the Catholicos as the heir of Peter's primacy intensified. By 775, the synod of Patriarch Henanjesu II declared:

[Christ] established as head and leader, as a part of himself and his image, Peter, head of the Twelve... He who sits upon this catholic throne is himself Peter, because he is the heir of Peter... Now it is manifest that Peter is a part of Christ, as the branch is part of the vine, and he who inherits this see is himself Peter, and a part of Christ, after the example of Peter... [Chabot, *Synodicon Orientale*, 517-18]

The East Syrian church, Nestorian in doctrine and isolated from the rest of Christendom, continued to spread eastwards as far as India and China. Even during this period, however, contacts with Rome occasionally occurred.

In 1237 the priest Philip, a Dominican prior in the Holy Land, wrote a report for the pope about the conversions of certain East and West Syrian prelates. In spite of the less than exact terminology used by Philip, we leave his words as they are. The Dominican priest wrote:

...the patriarch of the East Jacobites, a man venerable indeed for his knowledge, morals and age, with a tremendous entourage of archbishops, bishops and monks of his nation, came this year to adore in Jerusalem. We explained to him the word of the Catholic faith, and divine grace cooperated so greatly that we reached the point that on Palm Sunday, in the solemn procession... he promised and swore obedience to the holy Roman Church, abjuring all heresy as well; and he gave us his profession of faith in Chaldean and Arabic, for an everlasting testimony. He even received our habit as he left. He is in charge of the Chaldeans, Medes, Persians and Armenians... and in other kingdoms his prelature is so vast that seventy provinces obey him, in which countless

Christians live... Two archbishops acted in like manner—one a Jacobite from Egypt, and another, a Nestorian from the east, but they have their prelatures and subjects in Syria and Phoenicia... We have already received several letters from another prelate who is in charge of all whom the Nestorian heresy separated from the Church, whose prelate extends through greater India, and the kingdom of Prester John, and throughout the kingdoms nearer to the East... he promised that he wants to obey and return to the bosom of ecclesiastical unity. We also sent brothers into Egypt, to the patriarch of the Egyptian Jacobites... from whom we also heard that he wants to return to the unity of the church... to him are subject India Minor, Ethiopia and Libya along with Egypt... [Raynaldus, *ad annum* 1237, 87]

In 1247 Raban Ara, patriarchal vicar for the far flung East Syrian church, sent this missive to Pope Innocent IV [1243–1254]:

To the presence of the magnificent pope, from him who requests his prayers in support of his own weakness—Raban Ara, vicar of the east, venerating his hands. To the father of fathers, glory of pastors... interceding for the people of the Lord, perfect in divine things, excellent in spiritual things. To the sun of justice whose light arises over the four corners of the earth who shines and is resplendent in the holy Catholic churches. To the Cherub in the body and Seraph in the flesh holding the see of Blessed Peter; to my most holy lord, pope of the city of Rome and of all regions of the world before God... [Raynaldus, *ad annum* 1247, 32]

Raban Ara's letter goes on to mention a profession of faith that he was sending in the name of several East Syrian bishops:

Now we have sent to you, by the hands of the said brethren, your messengers, a *libellus* [profession of faith] that we have brought from the bosom of the east, that is, from the land of

China, and another profession of faith from the archbishop of Nisibis, which was signed by two other archbishops and three bishops... We also profess the holy supreme pontiff of Rome, and universal father of all Christ's faithful: and we confess that he is the successor of Blessed Peter, universal vicar of Jesus Christ over all the children of the church, from the east even unto the west, whose love and affection is confirmed in our hearts, and we are under his obedience; and we request and implore his blessing, and we are prepared for his every precept... All the prelates of the east who are among us, Archbishops and Bishops, and priests and religious and the other faithful, make supplication to you and greet you with prayers, and ask of you a prayer and a blessing... [Raynaldus, *ad annum* 1247, 35]

At about the same time, the Jacobite or West Syrian patriarch also embraced the Roman communion. In 1247 Ignatius, patriarch of the Jacobites, sent a Catholic profession of faith to Pope Innocent IV [1243-1254], and a letter which begins:

...to the father of fathers, the most holy Innocent holding the see of Blessed Peter, prince of the apostles, glorified by Christ God who entrusted to Blessed Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven and placed him as foundation of the Church... [Raynaldus, *ad annum* 1247, 36 sq.]

After calling the pope the "common father after the heavenly father, and common lord after the heavenly lord," the converted patriarch professed his faith, adding:

...we receive all who follow the faith of the prince of the apostles, and proceed by the way of Blessed Peter [and] of the Council of Nicea... In like manner we condemn and excommunicate everyone who deviates from the faith of Blessed Peter and the Council of Nicea... This then is our faith, and with us the Egyptians, Armenians, Libyans and

Keys Over the Christian World

Ethiopians. We confess again that the sacrosanct Roman Church is the mother and mistress of all the Churches, and that it is in her that the bodies of the holy apostles Peter and Paul were laid... [Raynaldus, *ad annum* 1247, 37–38]

At this point, the papal register also contains Catholic professions of faith attributed to “another” Jacobite patriarch [sic], as well as a Jacobite primate, John. [Raynaldus, *ad annum* 1247, 39–41]

Late in the thirteenth century, Kublai Khan, emperor of China, sent two Nestorian monks named Mark and Rabban Sawma on a mission to Jerusalem, to obtain assistance in liberating the Holy Land. Although Mark never made it to his destination, he was elected Patriarch of the Nestorians under the name Jaballaha III [1281–1318], and Rabban Sawma made visits throughout the west, including Rome.

Their travels and adventures were recorded on a Syriac manuscript published in 1895 by Fr. Paul Bedjan, under the title, *Histoire de Mar Jaballaha, Patriarche, et de Rabban Sauma*. Two major translations exist of this work. One was in French, by Syriac specialist J.B. Chabot, entitled, *Histoire de Mar Jaballaha*. [Paris, Leroux 1895] The other was in English, by Sir E.A. Wallis Budge, entitled *The Monks of Kublai Khan*. [London, 1928]

The English version, by Wallis Budge, describes how Rabban Sawma went on pilgrimage to many places in Europe, including Rome, where he had extremely cordial relations with Pope Honorius IV. Unable to persuade Rabban Sawma to stay in Rome, the pope, according to this account, sent rich gifts to the patriarch, Mar Jaballaha III, along with the following mandate:

And he sent to Mar Jaballaha a crown for his head which was of fine gold, and was inlaid with precious stones; and sacred vestments made of red cloth through which ran threads of gold; and socks and sandals on which real pearls were sewn; and the ring from his finger; and a *Pethikha* [i.e., papal bull] which authorized him to exercise Patriarchal

dominion over all the Children of the East. And he gave to Rabban Sawma a *Pethikha* which authorized him to act as Visitor-General over all [eastern] Christians... [Wallis Budge, *The Monks of Kublai Khan*, 196]

In 1304, Yahballaha III wrote a letter to Pope Benedict XI [1303-1304], which begins:

To the father superabundant in holiness and superexcelling in spiritual gifts, to the vicar of our Lord Jesus Christ sitting over the entire Christian faith upon the see of Blessed Peter the apostle, our father and patron, to the father of fathers, [sic] king of kings, the most holy pope Benedict... [Raynaldus, *ad annum* 1304, 23]

Yahballaha noted that he had recently been visited by a Dominican missionary named Father James, who had informed the patriarch of the death of Pope Boniface VIII. This missionary priest had explained the nature of the Roman primacy to the eastern patriarch, whose letter continued:

[Father James] also insinuated to us that this greatest of gifts, which is the supreme see of the apostolic throne and the universal paternity of all the faithful, and the supreme pontificate of all pontiffs in all the Catholic and apostolic Church the almighty and most merciful God has conferred on your holiness... The same brother also informed us that by God's will and disposition, and the order of the grace of the Holy Spirit, you have obtained the apostolic Roman see... [Raynaldus, *ad annum* 1304, 23-24]

The patriarch's letter continued:

...when we heard these things, our joy greatly increased and sorrow and sadness left us, and we praised and blessed our Lord Jesus Christ, who promised us by His gospel, "I shall not leave you orphans," and we asked of His mercy that

your paternity and domination would be blessed over all generations... and that [God] would exalt your word over all the world, and strengthen the conception of your mind unto His honor and make your counsel blessed: and we ask Your Holiness to deign to remember us and all Christians in your holy prayers... For our entire hope lies in your holy prayers, and in your regime and government; nor do we have anyone to direct our eyes, after God, except to the piety and mercy of you who are our father in the place of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now if our holy father the supreme pontiff— may God keep and preserve him— wishes to know or hear our faith, it is the following... [Raynaldus, *ad annum* 1304, 24]

The letter from the Catholicos of the east continued with a profession of faith that included this declaration:

We also profess the holy supreme pontiff of Rome, and universal father of all Christ's faithful: and we confess that he is the successor of Blessed Peter, universal vicar of Jesus Christ over all the children of the church, from the east even unto the west, whose love and affection is confirmed in our hearts, and we are under his obedience; and we request and implore his blessing, and we are prepared for his every precept... All the prelates of the east who are among us, Archbishops and Bishops, and priests and religious and the other faithful, make supplication to you and greet you with prayers, and ask of you a prayer and a blessing... [Raynaldus, *ad annum* 1304, 26]

Two years earlier, another Syriac prelate, Dionysius, bishop of Tauris, had also written to Rome, to Pope Boniface VIII [1294–1303], asking to be accepted as “a son and disciple of your holiness.” [Wadding, *Annales Minorum* 6: 669]

During the period of the Council of Florence [1439–1445], it

appears that both East and West Syrian bishops reconciled with the Roman Church. In the bull *Multa et admirabilia*, Pope Eugenius IV [1431-1447] notes that Abdallah, the archbishop of Edessa under the Syrian patriarch Ignatius, had made a completely Catholic profession of faith. Abdallah seems to have been a Jacobite or West Syrian bishop, because the pope had given specific instructions to him about the two natures, wills and operations in Christ. The papal document adds that Abdallah, acting in the name of his patriarch and his entire church, had read an Arabic translation of the decrees of Florence and accepted them. [Raynaldus, *ad annum* 1444, 15-16]

In 1445, a Nestorian archbishop in Cyprus named Timothy made his submission to the Roman Church, and offered a Catholic profession of faith included in the papal bull *Benedictus sit Deus*, which included these passages:

I, Timothy, Archbishop of Tarsus, metropolitan of the Chaldeans who are in the island of Cyprus... profess, vow and promise to the immortal God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and to you, most holy and most blessed father, Pope Eugene IV and this sacrosanct Apostolic See, that from now on I shall ever remain under your obedience and under your successors, and under the sacrosanct Roman Church as the only mother and head of all the others... [Raynaldus, *ad annum* 1445, 22]

By the sixteenth century, the office of Catholicos or supreme patriarch in the East Syrian church was being passed on from uncle to nephew, but not everybody within the Nestorian community, or “Church of the East,” was happy with this state of affairs. In 1551, Patriarch Simon Sulaka was designated by leaders of the community to make the journey to Rome in person to offer his profession of faith. Noting that “our priesthood is from Rome, which is the see of Peter, head of the apostles, from earliest times,” the Chaldeans sent a letter to Pope Julius III [1550-1555], which begins:

To the Father of fathers and first Pastor... to the Peter of our

time and the Paul of our days, and the bond comprising all Christendom. You are in the place of Christ, our master; you sit in the lofty and sublime see of the Head of the apostles, holding the keys of the kingdom of heaven, to whom our Lord said, with his saving mouth: "Whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven," and upon him He founded His church, so that the gates of hell would never prevail against it... You are the head of all fathers, as Peter was of all the disciples... [Raynaldus, *ad annum* 1553, 42]

Sulaka made this oath of obedience to Pope Julius III, which is based on the decrees of the Council of Florence. The oath was reproduced in the bull *Divina disponente clementia*:

I hold and confess that the holy Apostolic See and the Roman pontiff hold the primacy in the whole world, and that the Roman pontiff is the successor of Blessed Peter, prince of the apostles, and the true vicar of Christ, and head of the entire Church and father and teacher of all Christians, and that to him, in Blessed Peter, full power of feeding, ruling and governing the universal church was delivered by our Lord Jesus Christ... Moreover, I promise that as an obedient son I shall always faithfully obey the ordinances, precepts, censures and orders of [the present] Pope, Julius III, and his canonically elected successors, and the Apostolic See. So help me God and the holy Gospels... [Raynaldus, *ad annum* 1553, 45]

The same oath was also taken by Sulaka's successor, Ebedjesu IV of Gazarta. In 1578, certain Malabar Christians of India, who claimed to have been evangelized by St. Thomas the apostle, wrote to Pope Gregory XIII [1572-1585], asking him to instruct their patriarch to appoint bishops for them, "as they originally used to be sent by our patriarch." [Giamil, Samuel. *Genuinae Relationes Inter Sedem Apostolicam et Assyriorum seu Chaldeorum Ecclesiam*, Rome 1902: 40, 85-86]

Over time significant numbers of East Syriac Christians returned to Catholic communion, and are known as Chaldean Catholics.

Appendix. St. Peter in the Syriac Tradition

Aphraates, “the Persian sage,” [c. 330] in his homilies, or *Demonstrations*, includes these comments about St. Peter:

Simon, who was called Cephas, because of his faith was called the firm rock... [Dem. I, 17] David, highest of the kings of Israel, confessed his sin and obtained forgiveness. And Simon, *prince of the disciples*... when he denied [Christ] underwent repentance, and [the Lord] received him and made him the foundation, and called him Cephas, *edifice of the church*... [Dem. VII, 15] [Christ] chose and established excellent leaders, to whom He entrusted the sheep, and set them over the entire flock. For He says to Simon Cephas, “Feed for Me my sheep and my lambs and my ewes.” And Simon fed the flock until, when his time was fulfilled, he handed over the flock to you and left... [Dem. X, 4] Jesus son of Nun raised up stones for a testimony in Israel; and Jesus our Savior called Simon the firm Rock, and established him as a faithful witness among the nations... [Dem. XI, 12] Moses drew water from a rock for his people; Jesus sent Simon Peter to carry His doctrine among the nations. [Dem. XXI, 10] David handed over the kingdom to Solomon, and was gathered unto his fathers; *Jesus entrusted the keys to Simon*, and ascended and returned to Him who sent Him... [Dem. XXI, 13]. [Parisot, *Patrologia Syriaca* 1: 39–42, 335–6, 454, 502, 959, 966]

[On the witnesses of the Transfiguration:] Simon Peter, foundation of the Church, and James and John, most firm pillars of the Church... [Dem. XXIII, 12. Parisot, *Patrologia Syriaca* 2: 35]

Saint Ephraem and the Primacy

St. Ephraem, a fourth century deacon of the Church of Edessa, was perhaps the most famous of the Syriac fathers. Ephraem represents Christ as addressing Peter:

Simon my disciple, I have established you as foundation of the holy Church. Previously I called you Kepha, because you will uphold my entire edifice. You are the inspector of those who build a Church for me on earth. If they should wish to build anything badly, you the foundation shall stop them. You are the fountainhead from which my teaching is drawn; you are the head of my disciples. Through you I will give drink to all the nations. Yours is the life-giving sweetness which I impart. I have chosen you that you might be the first-born in my institution, and become the heir of my treasures. I have given to you the keys of my kingdom. Behold, I have established you prince over all my treasures. [Homily 4. Lamy, T. J., ed., *Sancti Ephraemi Syri Hymni et Sermones*, Paris 1882, 1: 412]

Elsewhere, St. Ephraem asks rhetorically, “To whom, O Lord, didst thou entrust that most precious pledge of the heavenly keys? To Bar Jonas, prince of the apostles...” [*Opera Syriaca*, Rome 1737, 3: 486]

Some of Ephraem’s hymns were preserved in an Armenian version. In a hymn in honor of virginity, the saint praises the effects of chastity in Simon Peter:

Let us consider what happened to Simon, in his holiness, for [Jesus] made him the foundation of the Church and granted that he hold authority. And He established him head of the apostles and gave him the keys of souls. He granted to him that he feed His sheep; He granted him [power] to loose and to bind. [HArm 5. PO 30: 52-3]

In another hymn preserved in Armenian, the saint observes that “Peter the Rock fled from honor, he who was head of the apostles.” [HArm. 44. PO 30: 208-9]

Expanding somewhat on these concepts, Ephraem adds:

Our Lord chose Simon Peter and established him prince of the apostles, foundation of the holy Church and protector of its firmness. He established him head of the apostles and commanded him to feed his flock and teach it laws for preserving the purity of its teachings. [Lamy, *Sancti Ephraemi Syri Hymni et Sermones*, Paris 1882, 1: LXXV]

Criticizing Gnostics such as Bardesanes and Manes, who had sects named after them, St. Ephraem points out that Christians could not name themselves after Cephas, “although he was the prince of the apostles, and had received the power of the keys, and was considered the shepherd of the flock.” [*Opera Syriaca*, Rome 1737, 2: 559]

In his *Commentary on the Diatesseron*, Ephraem discusses Peter’s confession of Christ, remarking: “Simon, the head and prince, said: ‘Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God.’” Commenting on Christ’s words to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan,” St. Ephraem even declares that Satan intended to fight with the Lord “through the mouth of Simon, head of the Church, as he [Satan] once did through the mouth of Eve.” [Ed. G. Moesinger, *Evangelii Concordantis Expositio Facta a Sancto Ephraemo Doctore Syro*, Venice 1876, 153-5]

Speaking of John the Baptist, St. Ephraem wrote:

When John saw that the course of his life was consummated, he handed over his flock to the prince of pastors just as the Lord also, at the time of his death, *handed over His flock to Peter, the presbyter of pastors*, so as to show the pastoral solicitude which He was going to show for it. [Moesinger, *Evangelii Concordantis Expositio*, 101]

Commenting on why Christ did not wash the feet of Peter first, Ephraem writes:

When He washed [the disciples'] feet, He did not begin with Simon, prince of the disciples. For inasmuch as the prince of angels laid aside the honor of His glory, how could the prince of the disciples stand on the dignity of his rank? Would he not rather have learned to imitate the prince of angels? [Moesinger, *Evangelii Concordantis Expositio*, 206]

Commenting on Peter's denial of Christ, Ephraem remarks that "if Simon, their [the disciples'] head, denied Him with an oath, how much more would His followers [have abandoned Him]?" [Moesinger, *Evangelii Concordantis Expositio*, 267]

Jacobite Writers

After the separation, Syriac writers continued to allude to the petrine primacy. Zachary the Scholastic, a close friend of the monophysite leader Severus of Antioch [c. 520], wrote a *Life* of Severus in Greek, which was preserved only in a Syriac version. Zacharias refers to Peter as "this great bishop of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom the name of prince of the apostles was also given." [PO 2: 83]

Severus himself wrote a number of hymns, which were preserved in a seventh-century Syriac version by Paul, bishop of Edessa, a version later revised by James of Edessa. The hymn for St. Mark describes him as "the true disciple of the great Peter, prince of the apostles." [PO 6: 172]

In Cathedral homily 53, Severus calls St. Peter the "first head of the apostles..." [PO 4: 39] and in Cathedral homily 1, Severus calls Peter "greatest of the apostles... the rock on which Christ, God of the whole universe, established the basis of the Church which is everywhere." [PO 37: 259]

Commenting on Mt. 17, 23 sq., Severus remarked, "Peter also was

a first-born and likewise subject to the tax, he whom his Master put on the same level as himself, honoring him as head and leader [*protostates*] of the apostles..." Because of Peter's humility, Severus adds, the gospel of St. Mark omits texts that tend to exalt Peter, dwelling instead on Peter's shortcomings. [PO 20: 366, 373-4]

A century later, John, abbot of Beith-Aphthonia, wrote another *Life* of Severus, from the monophysite point of view. John depicts Severus as rejecting the Council of Chalcedon because, in the opinion of Severus, the council had rejected the faith of Peter. John attributes these words to Severus: "Whoever has rejected the faith of Peter has also lost the power of Peter, to whom our Lord said... 'I shall give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven...' Thus the council that has rejected the faith of Peter does not have the power of loosing, binding or excommunicating." [PO 2: 256]

Bar Hebraeus, the thirteenth century patriarchal vicar and one of the most celebrated Jacobite scholars of all time, repeatedly calls St. Peter the chief of the apostles. In his commentary on the gospels commonly called *Horreum Mysteriorum*, Bar Hebraeus writes, "the Romans requested of Peter the chief of the Apostles that he should write for them a Gospel..." [W. Carr, ed., *Gregory Abu'l Faraj commonly called Bar-Hebraeus Commentary on the Gospels from the Horreum Mysteriorum*, London 1925, 75]

St. Peter in the Syriac Liturgies

While the Roman and Greek churches commemorated Ss. Peter and Paul on June 29, the Syriac churches originally commemorated them on December 28. A fourth century Syriac menology, or sanctoral calendar, contains this entry for December 28: "In the city of Rome, Paul, apostle, and Simon Peter, head of the apostles of our Lord." [PO 10: 11]

Jesus had foretold that Simon was going to be called *Kepha*, which was translated into Greek as *Petros*, meaning rock. The Syriac liturgy sometimes gives the name "Kepha" in the variant form *Kipho*. When we encounter the name *Kipho*, Peter is designated as the Rock of the Church.

East Syrian liturgy contains many texts on this theme.

The East Syrian liturgy is contained principally in a book called the *Hudra*, which means circle, because it contains the cycle of offices which are repeated each year. A printed edition of the *Hudra* was published at Trichur, India, between the years 1960-1962.

British Library Syriac manuscript 7178 contains a series of liturgical prayers which the Church of the East calls *gazza*, which means “treasury.” The *gazza* contains offices for feasts of the saints throughout the year. This manuscript contains an “office,” or liturgical prayers in honor of Saints Peter and Paul.

The following texts come from the *Hudra* and *gazza* found on British Library Syriac manuscript 7178. Both of these sources come from the Nestorian Church or “Church of the East.” The prayers routinely call Peter the head of the apostles or head of the twelve, and include numerous references to Peter as the rock, to the power of the keys, and the power of binding and loosing, for example:

Hear this! Jesus in His Gospel said to Peter: “Thou art the rock on which My Church is built.” [British Library Syriac MS 7178, fol. 160b, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

The head of the disciples, Simon, son of Jonah, on whom our Lord built His faithful Church... [British Library Syriac MS 7178, fol. 160, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

“Blessed art thou, Simon, son of Jonah,” cried out our Redeemer and He said to him: “because on thy foundation I will build my Church. And the gates of Sheol shall not prevail against her. And to thee I will give the keys of the height and the depth, so that thou mayest bind and loose on earth and in heaven, and thou wilt catch men for the Gospel and wilt pen them up in thy sheepfold...” [British Library Syriac MS 7178, fol. 166, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

Blessed art thou, Simon, son of Jonah, because the living mouth attested and said: “Blessed art thou, because on thee I am building and making firm holy Church. Blessed art thou because the infernal gates and those of tyrants shall never prevail against her. Blessed art thou, Simon, because I am entrusting to thee the keys of the height and the depth. Blessed art thou, because everything that thou wilt bind here on earth by thy command—blessed art thou, because it will be bound, ratified and sealed forever in Heaven. Blessed art thou, Simon, because everything that thou wilt loose on earth will be loosed in Heaven. [British Library Syriac MS 7178, fol. 168b, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

This is blessed Peter, to whom the saving mouth swore and made to him the promise, that on him He would build holy Church. This is holy Simon, that all kings and tyrants would not prevail against the Church whose foundation is fixed and placed on him. This is the true Rock... This is Blessed Peter, whom the one who examines all wisdom... appointed head of His twelve [apostles]... [British Library Syriac MS 7178, fol. 169b, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

This is holy Simon, who was given authority by our Redeemer within this Church that is on earth and in that one that is above in Heaven. This is the true Rock, to whom our Lord said that he should open and bind up as well both the height and the depth and all that is in them. This is blessed Peter, to whom were entrusted by our Redeemer the keys of the height and the depth, that he should bind and loose by his command. [British Library Syriac MS 7178, fol. 170, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

Blessed art thou, Simon, treasurer holding the keys of the kingdom, because on thee is placed the structure of holy Church, because thou art the true rock, and thy Lord has placed thee as a foundation within His churches, so that thy

fellow servants may build confession without doubting, true faith... [British Library Syriac MS 7178, fol. 150b, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

Blessed art thou, Simon, son of Jonah, head and first-born of the disciples, to whom thy Lord who chose thee gave the keys of the height, that thou mightest open the gate to penitents. Three times thy Lord gently summoned thee, "Feed me my lambs, feed me my sheep, feed me my rational ewes that I purchased for myself by my own blood. I am making thee the procurator of the kingdom on high. Take care and govern wisely as a wise steward, the distributor of the spiritual treasure. [British Library Syriac MS 7178, fol. 150, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

"Thou hast set me firmly on the rock foundation of the truth of Simon the Rock..." [*Ktaba da-qdam wa-d-batar wa-d-hudra wa-d-kaskol wa-d-gazza w-qala d-'udrane 'am ktaba d-mazmore*, Trichur 1960, 2: 463]

Simon, head of the apostles, whom his Lord commanded and said to him: "Feed me my sheep and my lambs and my ewes, because thou wilt receive the keys of the kingdom." So, feed and preserve the flock redeemed by the Cross with alertness and diligence... O Christ, who didst place him as head within thy Church, preserve her children by his prayers... [British Library Syriac MS 7178, fol. 150b, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

Simon, head of the apostles, whom his Lord commanded and said to him: "Feed me my lambs and my ewes and preserve them from the Evil One..." [British Library Syriac MS 7178, fol. 177, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

Simon the Rock, who holds the keys of the heights and the depths... Peter who holds the keys of Heaven, both there

above and here below... Peter, head of the Apostles, to whom He gave the keys of the height and the depth... [*Ktaba da-qdam wa-d-batar wa-d-hudra wa-d-kaskol wa-d-gazza w-qala d-'udrane 'am ktaba d-mazmore*, Trichur 1960, 1: 684. 688]

Peter, the Rock, and Syriac Writers

Syriac writers echo the liturgical texts when they proclaim Peter as the rock. Moses Bar Kepha, a ninth century Jacobite bishop, delivered some homilies which were recorded in Carshuni, which is basically Arabic written with the Syriac alphabet. In his first homily, on the dedication of a church, Bar Kepha said:

...when the Lord went forth into the regions of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying: "What do people say concerning the Son of Man, who He is?" So Peter replied, confessing Him, saying: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." So at that very moment Christ said to Peter: "Blessed art thou, O Simon son of Jona... Thou art the rock, and *on thee I will build my Church*, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Thou shalt be called the Rock." Now our Lord wished to manifest to the disciples the ardor of Peter's faith, because it was pure like a rock of flintstone in which there is no flaw and no imperfection. Therefore our Lord said: "*On thee I will build my Church*, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." [Cod. Vat. Syr. 159: 3v, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

The Syriac treatise *On the Priesthood*, attributed to the Jacobite bishop John of Dara [c. 900], notes that Jesus "did not establish His earthly and visible Church without an earthly and visible leadership; rather He established within it as leaders the holy Apostles, and He made Peter the foundation of its structure, saying to him: "Thou art the rock, and upon this rock I shall build my Church." [*Le Sacerdoce*, ed. Hobeica, 71, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

Bar Hebraeus, Jacobite patriarchal vicar [c. 1260], commenting on Lk. 22, 24, where the disciples argue about which one of them was the greatest, remarks:

It is likely that [the disciples] were unmindful of what was said to Peter that “*Thou art indeed the rock and upon thee I will build my church, and I will give to thee the keys of heaven.*” [W. Carr, ed., *Gregory Abu’l Faraj commonly called Bar-Hebraeus Commentary on the Gospels from the Horreum Mysteriorum*, London 1925, 130]

Ibn Harir al-Tikriti, a Jacobite bishop writing about 870, composed a treatise preserved in Carshuni which says:

And the Fathers in the Christian Creed say: “And we confess one holy catholic and apostolic Church,” that is, gathering together the believers as a gathering that has been inherited from the apostles. And the faith has been inherited from them, especially from Simon, to whom our Lord said: *Thou art the rock, and on thee* [sic] *I shall build My Church*, that is, thou art the root and foundation which My community that believes in Me will imitate, as she proceeds in her conviction and faith. And thy action when thou didst confess the truth, and the Father made [it] known to thee from heaven. And this is what the gates of the abyss and hell will not shake, that is to say, unbelieving men, tyrannical kings, the powers of darkness, the partisans of heresy and their evil belief.

And whoever departs from her is not one of the children of light, and not one of those who have built their homes on solid rock; which, when the sea rages and its waves beat upon it, is not shaken, as Christ has proposed the parable. And she is not like other communities that have built their homes on sandy ground, and, when the rains come, the winds blow, the sea rages and its waves beat upon their homes,

collapse and are ruined, and their basements and foundations are torn out, because their construction was not upon Simon the Rock, and their builder was not Paul the elect, peace be upon them! [Cod.Vat. Syr. 205: 204v-205, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

In his theological hymns or *Carmina Theologica* Elias, Nestorian bishop of Anbara [c. 920], wrote in a similar vein:

He named the eldest among them rock, so that he might become the foundation for the truth, and so that upon him might rise the edifice of the true faith. He called him rock for constancy against opposing forces, and so that on it the structures might be brought in, even to the rafters of the walls. A rock for the girding of the structures that would bind and tie together, so that thus and by faith He might bind the Gentiles with the people [of Israel]. [Cod.Vat. Syr. 183: 305-305v, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

Elias of Anbara also wrote:

Those who are not unaware of the truth seek to know why the Savior called Simon Bar Jonah Kepha [Rock]. Since Christ the great Redeemer himself is the Rock of truth, why did He name another Rock and Head of the edifice? Just as in the Law many were called *christs* [anointed] and “saviors” of the people, although there is one Christ, the true and great Savior, even so did He give to Simon the same designation, the same name, that of Rock. Because Christ, the true Rock was about to ascend to heaven, and hide Himself from human eyes, He established on earth His vicar, and named him Rock of the edifice. He therefore bears on earth the image and person of his Master and Lord, and is a High Priest like his prototype. Indeed the supreme and great High Priest is Christ... He chose and established on earth his Procurator for all the churches, the elderly

Simon, Son of Jonah, foundation of the faith. He called him [Peter] Rock as his proper name, for nobody before him had ever been called by such a name. Now [Peter] was going to become the foundation and head of the edifice... [*Carmina Theol.*, Pt. 2, serm. 3, tr. in Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis* III, 1: 260]

James of Serug, a monophysite Syrian bishop [c. 520], was long mistaken for a Catholic, perhaps in part because of his strong affirmations about Peter as the Rock, for example:

You are a rock, and in the foundations of the great house I am placing you, and on you I shall build the Church that I have chosen. Your structure is firm, it will bear the weight and not give way; I shall place you as the first [stone] because you are firm. You be the foundation for the holy temple that is united to me in it; and on you I shall extend all the structures of “the Daughter of Day” [Church]... I shall build it on you because your superstructure is above disputes. Your truth is a rock; therefore you are the Rock; and on you I shall build the Church, which is above divisions. You are the Rock, and on you I shall build the glorious [Church]; and the bars of Sheol will not prevail over it by their [evil] manners. And what are the bars of Sheol, O listeners, if not death and Satan too, who have laid waste the earth? [P. Bedjan, ed., *Homiliae selectae Mar-Jacobi Sarugensis*, Paris 1906, 1: 475–6, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

He began on [building] the house and chose a rock and laid the foundation, and He gave [it to His bride as] a marriage gift, so that she might overcome death and Satan. He promised her that the bars of Sheol would not prevail over her, so that without trepidation she might give herself to be with him. The great apostle became the foundation for the great house, so that the bride might enter a foundation that is indestructible. He wove together a bridal chamber, and,

so that she might not be afraid, promised her, that the destroyers would not gain power over her structures. He began to build it, and on that great rock that He had found; He placed its edifice, the top of which would surpass even the clouds. He set in order twelve rocks in the palace of light; and He chose one [of them] on which the entire house would rise. He bound up and engraved and carved the great rock that He had found; and He dug deep [and] placed it in the great building... The Bridegroom chose it, and His Father carved it by that revelation, and the Spirit completed it and placed it in the foundations of the Church. [*Homiliae selectae Mar-Jacobi Sarugensis*, Paris 1906, 1: 477–8, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

The East Syrian liturgy has a feast called “Friday of Gold,” celebrated shortly after Pentecost to commemorate what St. Peter told the lame man, “Silver and gold I have none.” [Acts 3, 6] Henana of Adiabene [c. 575], head of the school of Nisibis, wrote a treatise explaining the origin of this feast. “Let us respect the head of the disciples, who had neither gold nor silver,” he wrote. [PO 7: 67]

The liturgy of the Friday of Gold contains this allusion to Simon Peter:

“To thee I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven, O Simon, son of Jonah, on thee I am building my Church,” his Lord said to him and commanded him, “and to thee I am entrusting the keys of the height and the depth, so that thou mayest open the door to the penitent.” [*Ktaba da-qdam wa-d-batar wa-d-hudra wa-d-kaskol wa-d-gazza w-qala d-‘udrane ‘am ktaba d-mazmore*, Trichur 1960, 3: 174]

Peter’s Fall Does Not Negate His Primacy

The east Syrian theologian Narsai [c. 500], who became master of

the school of Nisibis, wrote numerous metrical homilies. In a homily on the passion of Christ, Narsai made these remarks on the fall of St. Peter:

... the head of the Twelve... became weak and his will succumbed...The master did not impute [this as] an offense against the head of the disciples...The head of his doctrinal edifice He made the head of the apostles; and by his denial and by his repentance He opened in him a way for those lost. [PO 40: 119-21]

Dionysius Bar Salibi, Jacobite bishop of Amida [c. 1171], commenting on the words, “there arose a contention among them about who was the greatest among them,” wrote:

...[the apostles] fell into a contention regarding the *principality*... whether there was one among them who was able to rule them. And it appears that they forgot what was said to Peter: “*thou art Kepha*,” and, “*I shall give to thee the keys*...” [The Lord] mystically rebukes them because they had abandoned Simon whom He had chosen as their leader... and confirms the principality of Simon. “*Simon, behold Satan hath desired to sift you as wheat*...” He turns to Simon... to show that his fall would be more serious than that of the rest, *and because he was their leader*... they abandoned Him and fled *and their leader denied* [Christ]. “*And I have prayed for thee... and do thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren*.” ...if [others] have fallen into affliction and have doubted about Me as thou hast doubted, confirm and sustain them by faith in Me and receive them, as I Myself received and strengthened thee.” [CSCO, *Scriptores Syri*, series II, 99: 320-22]

Elsewhere, Bar Salibi calls St. Peter the “head and first of all” the disciples, and the “foundation of the church.” [CSCO 98 (Syr. 49): 139, 174]

James of Serug explains why Christ had built His Church upon a sinful man:

[Peter] first confessed the Son—who He was and whose Son He was—and he again was the same one that first denied, saying that he did not know Him. He was the leader and also the first for repentance; and properly it is on him that the Church in every manner is built. For the Son of Carpenters, who laid her foundations, is wise; therefore He built her on Simon from the beginning. The Church glories in repentance more than in anything [else], because it is in it that all of her congregations are abundantly rich. If the prostitute presses to enter, [and] also the robber, without repentance who would open the door to such as these? And therefore the Church is built on an apostate [sic], so that all her structures might fit together without confusion. [P. Bedjan, ed., *Homiliae selectae Mar-Jacobi Sarugensis*, Paris 1906, 1: 528, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

The Syriac treatise *On the Priesthood*, attributed to authors of different confessions, such as John Maron [Maronite patriarch, c. 700] and the Jacobite metropolitan John of Dara [c. 900], remarks:

For Christ likewise did not entrust His Church to John, a pure, zealous virgin, but to Simon, a married man who denied [Him] and was tried by the passions. [*Le Sacerdoce*, ed. J. Hobeica, Lebanon 1912, 46, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

British Library Syriac manuscript 7178 contains a Nestorian treasury of liturgical prayers which touches on this theme:

Simon the Rock, the head of the disciples, the friend of the Son... after performing deeds of power in the name of Jesus the Nazarene, out of fear forgot His promise, [yet] by means of repentance He remitted his transgression. And because He saw his true love, He made him head of His flock that

had been purchased by His blood. [British Library Syriac MS 7178, fol. 157, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

Peter, the New Moses

Some Syriac writers draw a parallel between Moses and Peter. Moses was the undisputed leader of God's people in the Old Covenant, a role that falls to Simon Peter in the New. The Liturgy and the fathers sometimes use references to the Transfiguration to introduce this comparison. St. Ephraem, for example, in a sermon on the Transfiguration, expressed a thought which is echoed in the Syrian offices:

The princes of the Old and New Testament saw each other there. The saintly Moses beheld the sanctified Simon; the Steward of the Father saw the Procurator of the Son. The former rent the sea to let the people walk in the midst of the waves; the latter raised the [new] Tabernacle so as to build the Church. [*Opera Omnia*, ed. G. Vossius, 687]

James of Serug comments, in his homily on the Transfiguration:

He brought together Moses, who is the beginning of prophecy, and John, who is the beauty of apostleship. He summoned Elijah and associated him with Simon, the head of the disciples, so that the keys [of power] over [all] creatures might be confirmed to him. He sought to make manifest before the herald Apostles that he had given the Spirit likewise to the prophets, and that they were His servants. He sent forth His Gospel so that it might prevail over the world through Simon, and He brought in Moses so that he might be a witness that he was true. [P. Bedjan, ed., *Homiliae selectae Mar-Jacobi Sarugensis*, Paris 1906, 2: 362-3, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

In a poetic homily on the Resurrection, James of Serug presents St.

John as deferring to St. Peter, out of consideration for the keys:

John came to the door of the bridegroom king's tomb, but he did not enter until Simon the perfect arrived. He waited for the one who bore the keys of the treasury to arrive, so that he as steward might open and enter. John stood like a wise man and did not enter, so as not to confuse the settled order of heraldship. He waited for the head of the disciples to arrive, who had fallen behind him, so that he might first see and bear witness to His resurrection. Simon Cephas, the head [or: wall] of the structures came and entered before him, so that he might be placed first on the apostolic building. The spiritual youth observed [good] order with regard to the noble old man, so that he might serve as the first foundation of the heraldship. [P. Bedjan, ed., *Homiliae selectae Mar-Jacobi Sarugensis*, Paris 1906, 2: 618-619, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

Peter, “vicar of our Lord” and head of the Apostles

Syriac tradition not only treats Peter as the head of the apostles; some Syriac authors come close to calling him the vicar of Christ. A 9th-10th century Nestorian liturgical commentary, *Anonymi Auctoris Expositio Officiorum Ecclesiae*, avers that Simon Cephas was made “the vicar of our Lord with regard to the apostles,” and calls St. Peter “prince of the apostles.” [CSCO 76, (Syr. 32): 71, 120]

Bar Hebraeus, in his *Chronicon Ecclesiasticum*, lists the bishops of Antioch who came after Peter, “prince of the apostles,” and writes:

The old Pontificate had ceased, and the new one began and was established by our Redeemer who constituted Peter head of the apostles, and gave him the keys of the kingdom of heaven...After the high priests of the Old Testament [is] Peter, High Priest of the New Testament... he went to

Antioch, where he laid the foundations of the Church, built an altar and made Evodius the first bishop. Then he went on to Rome, and was bishop there for twenty-five years. [Ed. Abbeloos-Lamy, Louvain 1872, 1: 32, 40]

Mar Barhadbsabba ‘Arbaya, Nestorian bishop of Halwan [c. 610], composed a *History of the Church*, calling St. Peter the “head of the apostles” who triumphed over the heretic Simon the Magician at Rome. Barhadbsabba criticized the second-century sect of Marcionites because “in place of Peter, head of the apostles, they elevated Marcion...” [PO 23: 188-9]

Barhadbsabba also composed a Syriac work, *Cause of the Foundation of Schools*. Comparing the Christian life with a school, the author spoke of the schools of Alexandria and Antioch as well as the Syriac schools of Edessa and Nisibis. Barhadbsabba compares Peter to the majordomo of the school, writing:

...the living Word of God... renewed the first school of his Father... He instituted John the Baptist as master of reading and inspector, and the apostle Peter as majordomo of the school... At the moment of his Ascension into heaven, he chose twelve renowned brethren... for leader, He gave them Simon, the majordomo of the school, and commanded him to feed the men, women and children... [PO 4: 367-72]

The editor notes that in the school of Nisibis, the “majordomo” fulfilled the roles of treasurer, prefect of discipline and librarian. [PO 4: 368]

James of Serug noted, in his homily on Peter’s denial:

In him there are degrees that are extremely high and that are low, so that all the ranks that are in the Church on him may be set in order. The perfect that exist in the world with difficulty, perhaps, attain to him; and again sinners by repentance are with him. In him there is place for the prostitute and the robber, and for all the just and the sinners

together. For he is the foundation, and all the structures are stretched out upon him, so that in every way the entire house might be constructed on him. [P. Bedjan, ed., *Homiliae selectae Mar-Jacobi Sarugensis*, Paris 1906, 1: 529–530, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

In a treatise on the martyrs, the Nestorian priest Isaiah, a disciple of the Catholicos Mar Aba [540–552], calls Peter the “head of the phalanx of apostles.” [PO 7: 5, 17]

James of Serug called Peter the “steward” for Christ’s house, whose authority of apostleship was to command “in lordly fashion”:

Because that disciple called the Son by His [proper] name, He pronounced him blessed and built the Church upon that apostle. He made him a rock and placed him in the foundations of His house, because He saw that he would hold up all the structures and would not give way. “To thee I am giving the keys of my kingdom,” He promised him, so that he might become both foundation and steward for the house. “If thou bindest on earth, it will be bound likewise in Heaven, and if it should happen that thou loose on earth, it will be loosed in Heaven.” He gave [him] the authority of apostleship on high and in the depth, so that it might give command in lordly fashion both above and below. [*Homiliae selectae Mar-Jacobi Sarugensis*, Paris 1906, 1: 479–80, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

Nestorian synods at times allude to the primacy. The synod of Jesujab I, in 585, calls Peter “the head of the twelve, the rock of truth.” An episcopal assembly of 612 calls Peter “head of the apostles.” [Chabot, *Synodicon Orientale*, 405, 592]

In a homily on the Transfiguration, St. Ephraem represents Jesus as addressing Peter:

If we remain here, how will the things of which I spoke to

Keys Over the Christian World

thee occur? How will the Church be built upon thee? How wilt thou receive the keys of the kingdom of heaven from me? Whom wilt thou bind, whom wilt thou loose? [*Opera Omnia*, ed. G.Vossius, 688]

In an encomium of Saints Peter and Paul, St. Ephraem waxes enthusiastic:

Hail, Peter, tongue of the disciples, voice of preachers, eye of the apostles, guardian of heaven, firstborn of those who bear the keys! [*Opera Graeca*, Rome 1737, 3: 464]

George, Nestorian patriarch of Seleucia-Ctesiphon [c. 680], remarked:

As glorious king of eternity, master of heaven and earth, [Jesus] entrusts the keys of the kingdom to Simon, head of His disciples, whom He names Peter, upon whom He bestows the power of binding and loosing in heaven and on earth... [Chabot, *Synodicon Orientale*, 505]

Moses Bar Kepha, a ninth century Jacobite bishop, remarked in his first homily on the dedication of a church:

Then our Lord said to Peter: "Whatever thou bindest on earth will be bound in heaven," and in that hour our Lord adorned him with the necklace of the headship of the disciples, gave him the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and honored him with blessedness. [Cod.Vat. Syr. 159: 3v-4, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

Ebedjesu, Nestorian bishop of Sobi or Nisibis, compiled a Collection of Canons about 1300, which enjoyed an authoritative status in the Nestorian Church. Ebedjesu related the keys to patriarchal authority, writing:

[Christ] designated the patriarchate, which is the principality

of principalities in the church, by handing on the keys of the kingdom of heaven which he gave to Simon, when the Redeemer Himself made him the head of the apostles, and gave him the presidency of their community in these words: “Do thou also be converted and strengthen thy brethren.” He also gave him [Peter] authority over the entire community of those who are established [as Christians] in the feeding of lambs, sheep and little sheeplings. [Mai, Angelo, ed., *Scriptorum Veterum Nova Collectio* 10: 107]

The Syriac treatise *On the Priesthood* teaches:

The Lord then added and said to Peter, and through him to those who hold his place in the Church after him forever, a word full of wonder because of its promise: “Everything that you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you will loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” [*Le Sacerdoce*, ed. J. Hobeica, 62, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

Peter in West Syrian Liturgy

The West Syrian liturgical offices, used historically by the Jacobites, contain many expressions analogous to those found in the East Syrian offices already cited. The West Syrian liturgical prayers appear on various Syriac manuscripts in possession of the British Museum [abbreviated here as BM], and other manuscripts owned by the French National Library in Paris. Essentially the same liturgical prayers were found on an Oxford manuscript known as Dawkins manuscript 32.

[Christ] who didst give to great Peter the keys of the kingdom, so that he might bind and loose both the height and the depth, and that God would [obey] him... [Oxford Dawkins MS 32, fol. 288v, tr. Prof. William Macomber; cf. French National Library, Syriac MS 164, fol. 107v]

[To] the apostle Peter the Son of God [entrusted] the keys

of the height and of the depth and [that he be] the foundation [of the Church. And He made him head and gave into his hands the authority of height and depth. And He set him as the true foundation of Holy Church, which He had acquired by His blood. [Oxford Dawkins MS 32, fol. 288v, tr. Prof. William Macomber; cf. French National Library, Syriac MS 164, fol. 107v-108]

Blessed likewise art thou, Simon the Rock, who holds the keys that the Spirit forged. The saying is great and ineffable, that above and below thou hast bound and loosed. Blessed are the treasures that He gave thee; how much they have multiplied, that the Cross has been fixed over the water, and the flock, in its love of him, behold it has brought forth all manners of virgins and saints. [Oxford Dawkins MS 32, fol. 290v, tr. Prof. William Macomber. Assemani found the same hymn attributed to Saint Ephraem on Nitrian Codex VII, and translated it in *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 1: 94-5]

Blessed be He who, instead of a denier, set [Peter] as the foundation of the Church and made him the head [of those] at [His] right hand, so that everyone who has fallen might be encouraged by him... Because our Redeemer saw that Simon had abandoned the world and loved Him, He set him as the rock and foundation and built on him holy Church. [French National Library, Syriac MS 164, fol. 112, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

The voice of our Lord was tender when saying to Simon, the head of the apostles, concerning the priesthood: "Behold I have made thee the steward and I have given in thy hands the keys of the height and the depth and the heavenly treasures. And if thou shouldst bind, I for my part am binding. And if thou shouldst loose, I for my part am loosing." [BM add. MS 14503, fol. 153, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

Blessed be He who chose Simon as head of the apostles and set him as a foundation for the Church. On the commemoration of Simon, the leader of the apostolic choir, behold the Church chants, “Glory be to Him who in His mercy willed, and instead of an uneducated fisherman, manifested [Peter] as apostle and foundation, halleluiah.” [French National Library, Paris, Syriac MS 164, fol. 115, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

“Simon son of Jonah, on thee I am building the Church,” his Lord said to Peter, “and in your hands I am placing the keys of the height and the depth...” On the commemoration of the herald Peter, elect and holy apostle, head of the apostles... by his prayer may mercy come upon the world. [BM *add.* MS 12,147, fol. 338, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

Our Lord chose Simon the Rock and made him head of the apostles and foundation for holy Church. And he set him for her confirmation. He saw that he had abandoned the whole world. So He came to him lovingly and gave the key of the height into his hands... And he appointed him to be the chief of the apostles and commanded him to pasture His flock... the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit [have] magnified the commemoration of Simon, the head of the apostles. [BM *add.* MS 14503, fol. 153, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

Blessed art thou, Peter, head of the apostles, because on thee holy Church is built, and she honors the day of thy commemoration. [French National Library, Paris, Syriac MS 164, fol. 116v-117, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

And in his providence He chose for Himself twelve uneducated men, and instructed them by His Holy Spirit... And He made Peter, the one who was exalted in perfection,

to be for them head and foundation, and he made him the model for the perfect, the repentant and sinners. And as the head and chief of his brothers, He sent him to Rome, the head and chief of cities. [French National Library, Paris, Syriac MS 164, fol. 121, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

Simon, the head of the apostles, was declared blessed by his Lord, and he was called “foundation” by the Architect of created things. And he handed over to him authority over the height and the depth, so that he might command as he wished... Glory be to Him who chose him and committed to him His flock... [BM *add.* MS 14703, fol. 248, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

Come, ye people of discernment and marvel at Simon, the head of the apostles, to whom our Redeemer ascribed blessedness and manifested him as the foundation of the Church... [Oxford Dawkins MS 32, fol. 288v; BM *add.* 14703, fol. 248, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

Blessed art thou, true Rock, foundation of holy Church, head of the apostles, fisher of men, who by his teaching of the Cross spread his net, summoned mankind and taught nations and peoples the good news of the Gospel... May his prayer be for us a wall... [BM *add.* 14703, fol. 248, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

Simon the Rock, leader of the apostolic band and foundation of holy Church, whose suffering [followed in] the footsteps of the Crucified... desired to [imitate] his Lord... [BM *add.* 14703, fol. 248; cf. Oxford Dawkins MS 32, fol. 289, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

Peter, head of the apostles, abandoned the net and the catching of fish, and he was called the foundation of the Church and received power from his Lord. [Oxford Dawkins MS 32, fol. 292, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

Great blessedness was ascribed to Simon, head of the apostles, by his Lord, and [He set him] as the foundation for the Church... [BM *add.* MS 14703, fol. 248v, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

Christ caught Simon the fisherman, and in place of fish, behold he caught men for the household of salvation. He cast his net in Rome and imposed bonds to the lioness [of Rome] as to a sheep, and brought men into his sheepfold... [BM *add.* MS 14503, fol. 153; Oxford Dawkins MS 32, fol. 289v, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

The apostles were sent to the four corners [of the earth] to make disciples. And each one of them, the Son of God entrusted and gave a region. Simon [was sent] to Rome... [Oxford Dawkins MS 32, fol. 290, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

Blessed is the true Shepherd, who gave His flock to His apostles. And He summoned Simon and said to him, "Thou art the head of the apostles. Pasture me my lambs and my ewes that I am committing to thee today." [BM *add.* MS 12147, fol. 338, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

Simon the chosen one, the rock, the head of the apostleship, the first and greatest in the blessed group of disciples—the Word chose him; He named him rock and foundation... him to whom the Master delivered the keys of the height and the depth so that he would open and shut, bind and loose like God... [BM *add.* MS. 14503, fol. 152v-153, tr. in *Revue des Sciences Ecclesiastiques* 6 (1877), 357]

Simon, head of the disciples, offered sincerity to the Son of God, who gave him authority over the height and the depth... [BM Ms. 14503, fol. 153, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

Thou first committed the keys of the kingdom of heaven at the time of his great profession [of faith], and through him [Thou didst commit them] to all his fellow [apostles]... Come in peace, Peter, chief and head of the apostles, holding the keys of the kingdom of heaven... [BM *add.* 17,231, fol. 181, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

Blessed art thou, Simon, head of the disciples of the Son of God. He ascribed blessedness to thee and made thee the steward of His treasury. And He gave thee the keys of the kingdom and gave thee authority over His heavenly riches... [Oxford Dawkins MS 32, fol. 290v, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

Our Lord said to Simon, the head of the apostles, "On thee, Peter, I am building Holy Church. Even the gates [and the bars] of Sheol are never prevailing over her." "Because on that rock of the household of Simon, the head of the disciples, I am [built] and I do not fear," the Church has believed and declared... [Oxford Dawkins MS 32, fol. 291v, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

You, who made of Simon the prince of the apostles and keybearer of the kingdom, have mercy... Blessed art thou, Simon, head of the apostles, you who pleased your master, who made you the foundation! Pray and intercede, O head of the apostles, Simon Cephas... [BM *add.* 14697, fol. 418, tr. in *Revue des Sciences Ecclesiastiques* 6 (1877), 528-9]

Blessed is He who made thee the foundation of faithful holy Church and entrusted in thy hands authority of the height and the depth as well... Glory be to Him who chose thee, Simon, head of the apostles. He appointed and made thee foundation of holy Church. Thy light, Peter, dawned on the land of Rome, and it was illumined by thy preaching.

And thou didst show them the true way. By thy prayers may our souls too be illumined. [BM *add.* 14697, fol. 418v-419, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

Blessed art thou, Simon son of Jonah, who didst receive thy [declaration of] blessedness from Christ, thy Lord. And he made thee shepherd of His flock... Blessed be Christ who chose thee and has honored the day of thy commemoration, Peter, apostle and foundation of holy Church. [BM *add.* MS 14697, fol. 419-419v, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

O you who were [called] by Christ our Savior honorable stone and head of the corner, you have established the foundations of the spiritual edifice of the faithful who are in all the universe... You received the beatitude of God, O honorable prince of the apostles, Simon Peter, when you said out loud: "Thou art the Christ..." [BM *add.* 14697, fol. 420-420v, tr. in *Revue des Sciences Ecclesiastiques* 6 (1877), 534-5]

...we honor today Simon, the head of the apostles and true foundation [of the Church] with love and faith... Great blessedness has been ascribed to thee by the Lord of all worlds, O honored head of the apostles and foundation of holy Church... Blessed art thou, Simon, head and chief of the apostles, because, behold the Church rejoices at thy commemoration... Blessed art thou because thou didst become the foundation in holy Church, and by thee its structure was enlarged. [BM *add.* 14697, fol. 423-423v, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

Blessed art thou, Simon, because thou wast entrusted with the keys of the height, and to thee all powers were committed... How beautiful was that saying that our Lord called out to Simon the Rock, when He said to him, "To thee I am giving the keys of the height, so that thou mayest bind and loose on earth and in heaven." How fair and

beautiful was that word that Simon heard from his Lord, when He committed to him the keys of the height: “Thou art the Rock, and on thee the Church is built...” [BM *add.* 14697, fol. 423–423v, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

The Roman Church and Syriac Sources

Syriac tradition agrees that Simon Peter ministered in Rome. The *Hudra*, or book of liturgical prayers of the “Church of the East”, contains numerous references to the apostle’s ministry in Rome, for example:

Simon the Rock, whom his Lord commanded, “Feed me my rams, feed me my ewes, because I am giving thee the keys of the spiritual treasury, so that thou mayest bind and loose everything that is on earth and what is in Heaven,” went up to Rome to frustrate error and sow in it the doctrine of life... [*Ktaba da-qdam wa-d-batar wa-d-hudra wa-d-kaskol wa-d-gazza w-qala d-‘udrane ‘am ktaba d-mazmore*, Trichur 1960, 1: 683–4]

Peter, head of the apostles, went up to Rome to frustrate the custom and speech of demons that Simon [Magus] had taught all the people in Rome... And the Church that is on earth He has lifted up and placed in Heaven on the foundation of the faith of Simon the Rock, head of the Apostles, so that it is unshakeable for ever and ever... [*Ktaba da-qdam wa-d-batar wa-d-hudra wa-d-kaskol wa-d-gazza w-qala d-‘udrane ‘am ktaba d-mazmore*, Trichur 1960, 1: 685]

British Library Syriac manuscript 7178, which contains liturgical prayers of the “Church of the East” for the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, also contains many references to St. Peter’s ministry in Rome, for example:

Blessed art thou, famed Rome, city of emperors, handmaid of the celestial bridegroom, because in thee, as in a harbor,

are buried two true heralds, Peter, that head of the apostles, on whose truth our Redeemer built His faithful Church... [British Library add. MS 7178, fol. 146b, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

Come, my beloved ones, let us adorn ourselves on the commemoration of... Peter, the head of the company of the apostles, who became triumphant and was crowned in Rome... [British Library Syriac MS 7178, fol. 166b, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

Come, my beloved ones, let us adorn ourselves with glorious and virtuous works on the commemoration of the apostles and teachers who have illuminated the world with their teaching, Peter, the elect and head of the apostles, who completed his service in Rome... [British Library Syriac MS 7178, fol. 166b, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

This is the true Rock, whose body is placed in honor in a church in great Rome; it is a source of benefits... [British Library Syriac MS 7178, fol. 171, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

In a homily on Pentecost, Narsai, the fifth-century poet of the school of Edessa who became master of the school of Nisibis, draws the familiar parallel between Moses and Peter:

Here the head of the Twelve is joyfully serene; and he makes peace reign within the mind of his companions. Moses cries out, "My thoughts are full of fear and dread"; whereas Simon proclaims hope, love and faith. Moses rent asunder the garment that the bridegroom had sent to the bride; whereas Simon covered the church of the gentiles with a robe of glory... Simon caused a new sound to be heard in the land of the Romans, and he taught them the chapter of the rule of one Creator. The mother of cities fell to (the lot of) the

head of the disciples; and he fixed in her, as though in a head, the eyes of faith. [A. Mingana, ed., *Narsai Doctoris Syri Homiliae et Carmina*, Mossul 1905, 2: 75-6, 81-2, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

Theodore Bar Koni was a Syriac bishop of about the eighth or ninth century who wrote a sort of catechism called *Liber Scholiorum*. Using a question and answer format, Bar Koni asks, “*what is the reason why Blessed Simon inaugurated the teaching of the nations?*” and provides this answer:

In the first place, because our Lord had given him the keys of the kingdom of heaven and placed him as foundation of the church. Secondly, because he was the head of the disciples. And... so that there would be no schism between the churches, with those from the Jewish people wanting to honor the head of the apostles, and the gentiles wanting to honor the rest of the apostles— and so that discord would not arise among the churches for this reason; but it was the grace of the Spirit that moved him to lay the foundation in the people and in the nations himself as the venerated head after our Lord; and also he placed his throne in the Church of the gentiles, lest the circumcised have a source of vainglory at the expense of the uncircumcised— one was at Rome, the all-powerful city, and another at Antioch, second [in rank] after Rome. [CSCO 448 (Syr. 194): 95]

Theodore Abuqurra, Witness of Melkite Tradition

Theodore Abuqurra, bishop of Haran [c. 750-825 A.D.], is an important witness of the Syriac Melkite tradition. Abuqurra, who came from Edessa, closely followed the tradition of Mar Sabas monastery in Palestine, especially the thinking of St John Damascene.

Abuqurra, an eminent apologist for the Melkite Chalcedonian faith, criticized other Syriac churches for inconsistency in accepting some councils while rejecting others. In Blessed Peter, Abuqurra wrote, Rome received a

special charism for the preservation of the true faith:

It must be noted that the apostles had for their leader St. Peter, to whom Christ had said: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against her" [Mt. 16], to whom he also said three times, after his resurrection, near the sea of Tiberias: "Simon, lovest thou me? Feed my lambs and my sheep." [Jn. 21, 15-18] He said to him elsewhere: "Simon, Satan has sought to sift you like wheat, and I have prayed for thee that thou mayest not lose thy faith, but turn then towards thy brethren and strengthen them." [Lk. 22, 31]

You see then that St. Peter is the foundation of the Church proper to the flock [of the faithful], and he who has his faith shall never lose it; he is also the one who is directed to turn to his brethren and strengthen them.

The words of the Lord, "I have prayed for thee that thou mayest not lose thy faith, but turn then towards thy brethren and strengthen them," *do not designate the person of Peter or the apostles themselves. Christ wanted to designate by these words those who shall take the place of St. Peter at Rome, and the places of the apostles.*

In the same way, when he says to the apostles: "I shall be with you all days, even to the end of the ages," he didn't want to designate the persons of the apostles alone, but also those who will take their places, and their entire flock. Thus by these words which he spoke to St. Peter: "Turn then and strengthen your brethren, and may your faith not be lost," *He wanted to designate his successors*, for the reason that St. Peter alone among the apostles lost his faith [sic] and denied Christ, Christ had expressly abandoned him to show us that it isn't his person He wanted to designate, and we have not seen any apostle fall so that St. Peter may strengthen him.

*To say that Christ wanted to designate St. Peter and the apostles in person would be to deprive the Church of what must strengthen her after the death of St. Peter. How can that be? After the death of the apostles, as we see Satan endeavoring to sift the Church, it is evident that it wasn't them that Christ wanted to designate by these words. We all know, in effect, that it was after the death of the apostles that heresiarchs agitated the church, namely: Paul of Samosata, Arius, Macedonius, Eunomius, Sabellius, Apollinarius, Origen and the rest. If these words of the sacred text designate only the persons of St. Peter and the apostles, the church then would have been deprived of consolation and would have had nobody to save her from these heresiarchs and their doctrines, which are the gates of hell that Christ said will never prevail over the Church. It is clear, then, that these words designate the successors of St. Peter, who in fact never cease to strengthen their brethren, and never shall, until the end of the ages. [C. Bacha. *Un traite des Oeuvres Arabes de Theodore Abou-Kurra*. Paris, 1905, 34 sq.]*

In his treatise *On the death of Christ*, Abuqurra also insists on the Roman Pontiff's role in ecumenical councils:

By the grace of the Holy Spirit, in every circumstance our recourse is to build ourselves on the foundation of St. Peter, who administered the six holy councils which were convened by the order of the bishop of Rome, the capital of the world. Whoever is established on her throne is the one entrusted by Christ to turn to the people of the Church [with] his ecumenical council, and to confirm them, as we have established in a number of other places. [C. Bacha, ed., *Les Oeuvres Arabes de Theodore Aboucara*, Beirut 1904, 60-61. Tr. Sidney H. Griffith]

Ancient historical sources present the Christian emperors as

materially convoking the ecumenical councils, especially in the case of Nicea. In his apologetical writings, however, Abuqurra downplayed the role of Christian princes, and even asserted that the bishop of Rome convoked the ecumenical councils:

You know well that when Arius revolted, an assembly was gathered against him by order of the bishop of Rome. The holy council condemned him and put an end to his heresy; and the Church accepted the decision of this council...

When Macedonius revolted on the subject of the Holy Spirit, an assembly was gathered against him by order of the bishop of Rome; this council rejected the heresiarch and the Church accepted its decision...

When Nestorius revolted, saying what he did about Christ, the Church rejected his doctrine, and according to custom brought it to the holy council which met at Ephesus by order of the bishop of Rome. The holy council excommunicated him and ended his heresy...

When Eutyches and Dioscorus revolted, saying what they did about Christ, the Church drove out their heresy and the holy Fathers rose up against them. But the Church did not accept their doctrine, or the doctrine of those who contradicted them; she submitted them to the judgment of the holy council, according to her custom. The fourth council was then gathered at Chalcedon by order of the bishop of Rome; it excommunicated them and ended their heresy...

When Macarius, Cyrus and Sergius revolted and taught their errors about Christ, the Church refused to accept their opinion, and several fathers rose up against them to dispute with them and drive out their heresy. But the Church didn't absolutely accept their opinion or that of their opponents;

she brought them to the council, according to her custom. Then the sixth council was convoked at Constantinople by order of the bishop of Rome, which excommunicated them and ended their heresy... [Bacha, 35 sq.]

Special acknowledgment. We cannot help but note the extraordinary assistance and collaboration of Professor William Macomber, professor emeritus of the Pontifical Oriental Institute, Rome. Professor Macomber, who has an international reputation in Syriac studies, provided numerous translations of texts from the original Syriac, without which this section never could have achieved the accuracy and scientific value it possesses.

Chapter XXIII

The Mystery of the Arabic Canons

Some time during the era of Pope Pius IV [1559–1565], a Jesuit priest named Father Baptista Romanus accompanied one of his colleagues on a mission to see the Coptic patriarch of Alexandria. During the mission, Father Romanus borrowed a book from the Coptic patriarch which included an Arabic version of the canons of Nicea. The manuscript— unlike Latin and Greek versions of the canons of Nicea, which had twenty canons— contained *eighty* canons, far more than the standard number. The good Jesuit's curiosity had been piqued. [Mansi 2: 949]

Father Romanus copied the canons, returned to Rome and with the help of George, the Maronite archbishop of Damascus, had his copy translated into Latin. For the first time, western theologians were able to read and study the canons. The long lost collection contained canonical language about the bishop of Rome as head of the patriarchs. [Mansi 2: 949]

Another Jesuit, Father Francisco Turrianus, was keenly interested in the canons. Father Turrianus obtained a revised and improved translation from a merchant from Alexandria who was then in Rome. Father Turrianus also met a young convert to Catholicism from Turkey named Paul Ursinus, who knew Arabic and some Latin and Italian. Ursinus made a new translation, using an old Arabic copy from the library of Pope Marcellus II. Father Turrianus later published his Latin translation of the canons along with a Preface which explained how the canons had been discovered. The Preface and translation of the canons were reprinted in the eighteenth century council collection, *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio*. [Mansi 2: 949]

Several decades later, another Maronite scholar, Ibrahim of Hekel, better known as Abraham Ecchellensis, continued the research into the canons. After studying various editions of the canons in Arabic and other eastern languages, Ecchellensis published a new edition of the canons in Latin and Arabic, in 1645. [Reprinted in Mansi 2: 1065 sq.]

Abraham Ecchellensis pointed out that the canons differed in their numbering and content, depending on which edition is consulted, and that the different churches tailored the contents of the canons to their own views. Yet in many respects the canons reveal a Catholic conception of authority in the Church, in which the faithful respect the authority of their bishop, bishops obey their metropolitans, metropolitans obey their patriarchs, and the patriarchs themselves obey the supreme patriarch, the Pope of Rome. Canon 8, in the Arabic recension, is an expansion on the authentic canon 6 of Nicea, but the bishop of Rome is called “the patriarch, successor of Peter.” [Mansi 2: 984]

Along with the new translation of the Arabic Canons, Abraham Ecchellensis submitted a dissertation defending their authenticity. Ecchellensis cited manuscript evidence from the Vatican library that the Melkites, Maronites, Copts, Jacobites, Ethiopians, and Nestorians had, at one time or other, received the canons. Abraham Ecchellensis included the Armenians on his list as well, which may be explained by Armenia’s union with Rome during the high Middle Ages. [Mansi 2: 1071]

Not everybody in the scholarly community was impressed. In the next century, Eusebe Renaudot, the French expert on eastern Christianity and liturgy, discussed the canons in a history of the Coptic patriarchs. Although he scoffed at “the long and vacuous dissertation of Abraham Ecchellensis,” even Renaudot conceded that the canons were not “fake, worthless and supposititious,” and pointed out that “all the eastern churches—the Melkites, that is, the Orthodox Syrians, the Jacobites of whatever rite or language, the Nestorians—all have been using them for over nine hundred years, and their use was not confined to books and reading but even had a place in the judicial forum, when [legal] cases involving Christians were

judged by the bishops, or, in major cases, by patriarchs.” [*Historia Patriarcharum Alexandrinorum Jacobitarum*, 71]

Some of the “Arabic Canons of Nicea,” Renaudot pointed out, were really canons of Ephesus and Chalcedon, while other parts of the collection came from the Codes of Theodosius [c. 430] and Justinian [c. 535]. Various nations of the east, Renaudot believed, had collected, compiled, adapted, and to some extent interpolated this material, including genuine canons of Nicea and Sardica. Because eastern and western canonical collections began with Nicea, over time the *whole collection* came to be named from its first part, the canons of Nicea; the result was... the “Arabic Canons of Nicea.” Renaudot did not agree that the Arabic canons really came from the Council of Nicea, but he also admitted that they were not fake or forged in the vulgar sense; he noted that they had been compiled by serious canonists and used by various eastern churches. Renaudot conjectured that the collection, translated from a Greek original, had spread from the Melkites of Syria to other Churches of the east. [*Historia Patriarcharum Alexandrinorum Jacobitarum*, 72-5]

A century and a half later, another scholar entered the debate: Carl Joseph Hefele, Catholic bishop of Rotterdam, who took part in the First Vatican Council [1870]. In his *History of the Councils*, Hefele discussed the true number of canons of Nicea.

Early Christian historians, Hefele pointed out, had spoken of only twenty canons of Nicea— for example Theodoret [c. 450], Gelasius of Cyzicus [c. 485], and Rufinus [c. 380]. Moreover, about 419, during the dispute about the appeal of Apiarius, both the African bishops and Pope Zosimus had agreed to ask Alexandria and Constantinople for authentic copies of the canons of Nicea. St. Cyril of Alexandria and Atticus of Constantinople sent the copies; Atticus even provided a Latin translation of the canons. There were only twenty. [*A History of the Councils of the Christian Church*, 1: 355-7]

Finally, Hefele noted, the oldest collections of canons in Latin and Greek, dating at least to the fifth century, contained only twenty canons of

Nicea. Abraham Ecchellensis and other Catholic scholars had pled that Nicea had promulgated more than twenty canons, on the basis of certain ordinances or decrees mentioned by the Church fathers, which weren't recorded in the existing twenty canons. Hefele examined each piece of evidence from the fathers, one by one, and disallowed any claim about additional canons of Nicea. [*A History of the Councils of the Christian Church*, 1: 357 sq.]

In scholarly circles Hefele's arguments prevailed, and standard Catholic reference sources routinely dismiss the Arabic Canons as pseudo-Nicene. Hefele's arguments, however, were only one side of the coin. While he was perfecting his *History of the Councils*, Syriac scholarship was making enormous progress. Scholars were just beginning to publish various kinds of Syriac literature, and the newly available sources showed that the "Arabic canons" had existed in canonical collections for centuries.

The new scholarly editions showed what specialists like Renaudot had known for centuries: not only had canonists from several different churches accepted the canons, but acceptance of the canons *went across denominational lines*. The canons were received even in collections composed by authors not in communion with Rome, especially in the Nestorian or East Syriac Church.

Here are the two canons asserting papal primacy:

Canon 37. On the Patriarchs. Let there be four patriarchs in the whole world as there are four evangelists, and four rivers, and four elements of the world, and four corners, and four winds, and four elements of man, for of these four elements the whole world is composed. And let their Prince and governor be the lord of the see of Blessed Peter at Rome, as the apostles commanded...

Canon 44. The Patriarch Must Oversee Whatever His Metropolitans and Bishops Do. Let the patriarch oversee whatever is done by any of his metropolitans or bishops in the provinces over which they preside, and if he

find any of these things to be unfitting, let him change it, and lay down whatever seems good to himself about that matter, for he is the father of them all, and they are his sons. Now metropolitans must acknowledge this authority over themselves, and revere him as an older brother, whom brethren set over themselves, and obey him because of his optimal regime, and superior years. For a patriarch within his jurisdiction is in the image of a father over his sons. *And as the Patriarch has authority over his subjects, even so does the bishop of Rome have authority over all the patriarchs, as Peter had it over all the rulers of Christianity, and their Councils: for he is the vicar of Christ over his redemption, his churches, and the people in his care. Whoever contradicts this sanction, the fathers of the Council punish him with anathema.* [Mansi 2: 992-5]

These canons appear in the most authoritative collections of several eastern churches, especially Syriac churches. The documentation for the canons seems to be strongest in the East Syrian church. We will examine the canonical collections in descending chronological order.

Ebedjesu of Nisibis [or Sobi] was one of the leading canonists of the Nestorian Church, writing about 1300. Ebedjesu includes canons 37 and 44 in his *Nomocanon* for the Nestorian Church, Tract IX. In 1838, Cardinal Angelo Mai published the Syriac text of this *Nomocanon* together with a Latin translation by the Maronite Catholic scholar Joseph Assemani.

The same canon as canon 37 in Abraham Ecchellensis is also included in the *Nomocanon* of Ebedjesu, in the following form:

It has been agreeable to the ecumenical synod that there be four fathers in the whole world, like the four evangelists and the four rivers and also the four corners of the world, as the wise men of the world themselves also say, that there are four elements of which the world is composed. Now let their head be that of Rome, according to the precept of the apostles, which they laid down in their canons... Whoever

transgress these precepts, the ecumenical synod subjects him to anathema. [A. Mai, ed., *Scriptorum Veterum Nova Collectio*, Rome 1838, 10: 154]

The same canon as canon 44 in Abraham Ecchellensis is also included in the Nomocanon of Ebedjesu. Assemani offered the following translation:

It has been agreeable to the ecumenical synod that the patriarch have authority to examine whatever is done unfittingly by the judgment of the metropolitans or bishops; for the patriarch is the father of all, and all the metropolitans and bishops are sons of his inheritance. Now the honor of the patriarch rules as that of a father over his sons. *And as the Patriarch has authority to do whatever he likes that is fitting regarding those who are subject to his authority, in like manner let the patriarch of Rome have authority over all the patriarchs, as Blessed Peter had it over all the community, since the patriarch of Rome also holds the place of Peter in the universal church. Whoever transgress this, the ecumenical synod subjects him to anathema.* [*Scriptorum Veterum Nova Collectio* 10: 165]

After discussing the patriarchal sees, Ebedjesu wrote:

And because the patriarchal dignity and prerogative accrued to these cities *not only because of their power and antiquity, but also because of the apostle who taught in it...* [the patriarchal dignity] has been given to the mighty Rome because of the two pillars that were placed there; I mean Peter, prince of the apostles, and Paul, doctor of the Gentiles; and there also is the first see and the head of the patriarchs. [Mai, Angelo, ed., *Scriptorum Veterum Nova Collectio* 10: 154–5]

Benattibus [Ibn al-Taiyib] was another Nestorian scholar who wrote about 1000 A.D. In his Nomocanon composed in Arabic, discussing the priesthood, he noted:

A canon of the Church orders that the inferior must obey his superior, and that the obedience of all terminates with the patriarch of Rome, because he fills the place of Simon Peter. [CSCO 168, (*Arab.* 19): 121]

Ibn al-Taiyib attributed these words to Timothy I, Catholicos of the Nestorians [c. 778-820]. Ibn al-Taiyib also wrote:

As there is a reason for the authority of each patriarch over his metropolitans and so on, the same reason exists for the authority of the Roman patriarch over all patriarchs. [CSCO 168, (*Arab.* 19): 140]

Elias, the Nestorian archbishop of Damascus [c. 890], wrote a collection called *Canons of the Eastern Fathers*. This collection exists in manuscript form in Vatican Arabic Codex 157. After mentioning the canons of Nicea, Elias wrote:

And these are the ordinances that depend on them, which the leaders and those in charge hold fast, in brief both the easterners and westerners; they are 74 in number... **The second ordinance.** And they commanded and said that the patriarchs in the whole world should be four only, just like the four writers of the Gospel and its four basic elements, and that the lord of Rome should be the head, according to what the apostles commanded...

The eighth ordinance. And they commanded that the patriarch look into any affair of which any of the metropolitans is aware in their territories that they govern, and if he finds any of them contrary to what is needful and proper, then let him change it and give command concerning it, whatever is requisite, because he is the father of them all and they are his sons, whereas the metropolitan in his headship over them and their respect for him is in the position of the elder brother to whom his brethren offer

[respect] and owe obedience on account of his age and dignity. As for the patriarch, he is in the position of the father in his authority over his household. And just as the patriarch has authority over what is under his control, so likewise let the lord of Rome have authority over the rest of the patriarchs like Peter, inasmuch as he had a share of authority over all the leaders of Christianity and the community of its people, because he was the successor of Christ over the entire church. And whoever transgress this usage, the synod excommunicates him. [Vatican Arab Codex 157: 32v, 34, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

Why do the canons about the bishop of Rome appear as canons 2 and 8, instead of canons 37 and 44? The reason is that there is a Syriac collection consisting of 73 canons, and in the Syriac version, the canons about Rome's primacy are canons 2 and 8. According to certain Syriac writers, the Syriac collection was the basis from which the "Arabic Canons" were derived.

It seems certain that this collection existed in the time of the Nestorian patriarch Timothy I [778–820], because in his epistle 36, Timothy quotes from "Canon 63 [sic] of Nicea." Timothy, then, knew of a longer collection attributed to the Council of Nicea. [CSCO 75 (*Syr.* 31), 183]

Among West Syrians or Jacobites, the canon about the four patriarchs whose head is the Roman— canon 37 in Abraham Ecchellensis, or canon 2 in the Syriac— appears in the Nomocanon of Bar Hebraeus, a Jacobite patriarchal vicar [c. 1250], which was composed in Syriac, and also in various Syriac manuscripts of the Vatican library.

Bar Hebraeus includes this canon in Chapter VII of his Nomocanon, "On Priestly Orders." A Latin translation of the Nomocanon, also by Assemani, was published in 1838 by Cardinal Mai. Assemani gives the following rendering of the canon about papal primacy:

Of Nicea. There are four patriarchs according to the

number of the four corners of the world. And let the great head of all be that of Rome... [*Scriptorum Veterum Nova Collectio* 10: Part 2: 39]

Canon 44 in Abraham Ecchellensis, or canon 8 in the Syriac, appears in the Syriac treatise *On the Priesthood*, in the following form:

As for the patriarch, he has the place of a father, and, like a father, he has authority over his household. And just as the patriarch has authority over those who are under him, so the one of Rome has authority over all the patriarchs, as Peter had over all the leaders of Christianity and its congregations, because he is the viceregent of Christ for His Church and its congregations and all peoples. And whoever does not keep to these things, let him be anathema! [*Le Sacerdoce*, ed. J. Hobeica, Lebanon 1912, 125, tr. Prof. William Macomber]

The canons also appeared in Coptic collections. Abraham Ecchellensis cited the thirteenth century Coptic canonist Ibn Assal's *Preface to the Constitutions of the Alexandrian Church*, which mentioned, after the twenty authentic canons of Nicea, "another [collection], of great usefulness, a version of which was procured by the Melkites and Nestorians, and is accepted by the Syrian Jacobites, and the number of canons in the Melkite editions is eighty-four..." Coptic manuscripts that included the canons appeared in the middle ages. Mai, for example, lists a late medieval nomocanon by the priest Macarius, a monk of the desert of Scete. The seventeenth century work by William Beveridge, *Synodicon sive Pandectae Canonum*, also mentions a medieval manuscript attributed to the Egyptian priest Joseph. It should be remembered, finally, that Father Baptista Romanus had discovered the canons in a book belonging to the Coptic Patriarch. [Mansi 2: 1068; *Scriptorum Veterum Nova Collectio* 4: 275-83; *Synodicon sive Pandectae Canonum*, Oxford 1672, 1: 686]

In 1908 a Coptic priest, Girgis Philt'aos Awad, published an Arabic edition of Ibn Assal's thirteenth century canonical collection at Cairo, Egypt,

entitled: *Al Magmou Al-Safawy Le Ibn Al-Assal*. Dr. William A. Hanna recently published a preliminary translation of this work on the internet at www.zeitun-eg.net/ASSAL_AL.pdf. Although Dr. Hanna inserted copious editorial notes to make it clear that the Coptic Church does not accept papal supremacy, he gave a translation of the canons on this subject which in general is similar to the other translations which we are citing. The canons appear in Chapter 4, “*Concerning Patriarchs*,” where Dr. Hanna rendered them as follows:

The Holy Council (Nicea 37) ordained that the patriarchs of the whole world are four and no more, like the Gospels having four books, and the rivers of paradise are four, the winds are four, and the elements of the universe are four, and the head and the one to lead is the one on the chair of Peter in Rome. [*Al Magmou Al-Safawy Le Ibn Al-Assal*, p. 5, translated by Dr. William Hanna, www.zeitun-eg.net/ASSAL_AL.pdf]

The patriarch looks into every effort that the metropolitan and bishops are charged with in the cities that they are charged with. If he sees anything that needs to be changed, he changes it or orders it to be changed and he is their father and they are his children. The metropolitan is to be obeyed and respected by the bishops because he is like the older brother who puts his brothers ahead of himself and they obey him for his good policies and ability to coordinate. The patriarch is like a father in his authority over his household. As the patriarch has authority over those under his hand, the one on the chair of Rome has authority over all the patriarchs because he is first like Pete[r], and he has authority over all the heads of the Christians and their flocks because he is the representative of Christ to the people and the Churches. [*Al Magmou Al-Safawy Le Ibn Al-Assal*, p. 6, translated by Dr. William Hanna at www.zeitun-eg.net/ASSAL_AL.pdf]

Ibn Assal's Nomocanon also exists in an Ethiopian version, known as the *Fetha Nagast* or "Law of the Kings." The *Fetha Nagast* includes both canons about the Roman primacy— canons 37 and 44 in Abraham Ecchellensis, or canons 2 and 8 in the Syriac collection. A few decades ago, an English edition of the *Fetha Nagast* was published by Haile Sellassie University in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Chapter IV, on the patriarchs, contains the following remarks:

The Council of the Saintly [Fathers of Nicea], **NIQYA 37**, commanded that there must be only four patriarchs in the world [at one time], like the four books of the Gospel, the four rivers, the four orders of the world, the four directions of the world, the four winds, and the four elements of creation. The chief and prince among them must be the one who occupies the see of Peter, [that is, the see] of Rome, in accordance with what the Apostles commanded... [Strauss, Peter L., ed., *The Fetha Nagast — The Law of the Kings*. Translated by Abba Paulos Tzadua. Copyright 1968, Haile Sellassie University, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 17]

44. The patriarch shall watch over all work done and orders made by his metropolitans and bishops in the countries over which they are appointed. If he discovers something improper, he shall change it and make it conform with what appears proper to him, since he is like the father of all [metropolitans and bishops], and they are his children. The metropolitan appointed over the bishops shall be honored as the elder brother appointed over his brothers, and must be obeyed so that his rule and administration will be good. The patriarch, in his power, is like a father over his children. And as a patriarch has authority and power over those who are under him, so also the titular of Rome has power over all other patriarchs, because he is the chief, as was Peter, who had power over all Christian chiefs and the community of Christian men in his capacity as the Vicar of Christ, Our Lord, upon His people and His churches. [Strauss, Peter L.,

ed. *The Fetha Nagast — The Law of the Kings*. Translated by Abba Paulos Tzadua. Copyright 1968, Haile Sellassie University, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 18-19]

The canons also exist in a medieval canonical collection called the Ethiopian Synodicon which was written in Geez, the language of Ethiopian theological discourse. In this version, however, the second canon is truncated to omit the words about the Roman primacy. Although the Ethiopian Synodicon has not been published, it exists in manuscript form, for example Vatican Ethiopian Borgia manuscript 2, where the canons appear in the following version:

About the number of Archbishops/Patriarchs. Let there be four archbishops/patriarchs in the world as there are four winds, and the nature of man is of four [elements]. For the world stands on four. And let their superior be the lord of the throne of Peter at Rome, as the apostles have commanded... [Vatican Ethiopian Borgia ms. 2, fol. 131v]

About all the Archbishops/patriarchs, that they administer their metropolitans and bishops. Let the archbishop/patriarch oversee whatever deeds his metropolitans and bishops do in the provinces they govern. And if he finds a deed which is not allowed, let him stop it and order instead another one as he sees fit. For he is the father of them all, and they are his children. [Vatican Ethiopian Borgia ms. 2, fol. 132v-133]

Some Syriac writers, as we said, report a tradition that the original collection, from which the others evidently borrowed, consisted of seventy-three Syriac canons and was brought to the Syriac churches in 410 by St. Maruthas, bishop of Maiperqat. Ebediesu alludes to this tradition in his *Nomocanon*, Tract I, 3. [Mai, *Scriptorum Veterum Nova Collectio* 10:33]

A thirteenth-century Nestorian source, the *Chronicle of Seert*, has this remark about the Nicene canons: “those that the Melkites and Jacobites

admit number 73 canons, which come from the copy of Maruthas, bishop of Maiperqat.” [PO 4:280]

It is certain that Maruthas had been entrusted with a mission by Isaac, Catholicos of the east, to collect various canons promulgated by councils of “the west,” meaning councils within the Roman Empire. Isaac used the canons to help organize the Syriac churches of the east in the council of 410. Maruthas had translated the acts of various councils from Greek into Syriac; the question was whether he had anything to do with the seventy-three Syriac canons. [Chabot, *Synodicon Orientale*, 253 sq.]

In 1982, Syriac specialist Arthur Voobus published the Syriac text of the canons, with an English translation, in *The Canons Ascribed to Maruta of Maipherqat and Related Sources*. The documents attributed to St. Maruthas include a letter to Isaac, Catholicos of Seleucia, remarks on the translation of Greek technical terms into Syriac, comments on monasticism, the history of heresies, and various ranks and orders in the Church. [CSCO 440, Syr. 192]

After all these documents come the twenty authentic canons of Nicea, followed by the words, “Again we write the seventy-three canons, which are the following...” These are the Syriac canons attributed to St. Maruthas. The canons interpret and extend the provisions of the canons of Nicea, frequently remarking, “It is the will of the General Synod...” Other comments specify which canons of Nicea bind under pain of anathema and which do not. In this collection the canons about the Roman primacy appear as canons 2 and 8, or 9 in some manuscripts. Voobus offers the following translation:

[Canon 2] It is the will of the general synod that there shall be only four patriarchs in the entire world, in like manner as the four evangelists and the four rivers (of the Paradise) and the four parts of the world, (even) as also the sages of the world say that the four elements are the progenitors of the world. The chief shall be that one who is at Rome according to the command of the Apostles, who determined

it in their canons...

[Canon 9] *About this, that the patriarch has authority over every matter.* It is the will of the general synod that regarding all matters which do not take place aright, whether under the hand of another bishop, the patriarch shall have the authority to command in term (and that), authoritatively. For the patriarch is (the father) of the community (of prelates) and all the bishops are sons of his heritage. The honor of a metropolitan is as that of an older brother who orders (matters) among his brothers but the honor of the patriarch is like that of the father who has authority over his sons.

And just as it is lawful for the patriarch to do everything that he wills rightly in all (matters) of these (provinces) subjected to his authority, just so shall be the authority of that (prelate) of Rome over the patriarchs, as the blessed Peter (is) above the whole community (of prelates). For he also holds the place of Peter in the entire church, that (which is) in Rome.

The general synod puts him who transgresses these (canons) under an anathema. [CSCO 440, Syr. 192: 51, 58]

Such is the mystery of the “Arabic” canons, a collection which, according to all the evidence, came from within the eastern church. Contemporary Latin theologians never mentioned these canons, had no idea about their contents and were practically unaware of their very existence.

The canons appeared in eastern collections sometime in the early middle ages, and although unknown in the Latin and Greek Churches, were accepted in various churches in the vicinity of the Near East: the Jacobites, Nestorians, Copts, Ethiopians, and Melkites. The canons proclaim the primacy of the Roman Pontiff because of his dignity as successor of Peter, and under penalty of excommunication. Paradoxically, the canons continued to be included in the collections of these churches of the east, even in the

cases of churches which for long centuries had been estranged from the Roman communion.

Chapter XXIV

The Person of Simon Peter

When Jesus addressed Simon, “Blessed art thou...” He also changed that disciple’s name. Since then, Simon became known as *Kepha*, Aramaic for “Rock,” or *Petros* in the Greek.

St. Hippolytus called Peter “the Rock of the Church” [*In S. Theoph.* 9. PG 10, 859] and “the Rock of the faith, whom Christ our Lord called blessed, the teacher of the Church, the first disciple, he who has the keys of the kingdom.” [*De Fine Mundi et de Antichristo*, 9. PG 10: 913]

Origen, a contemporary of Hippolytus, spoke of “Peter, upon whom is built Christ’s Church, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail.” [Tom. 4 in Jn. PG 14, 188] Origen also called Peter “that great foundation of the Church, and most solid rock, upon which Christ founded the Church.” [In Exodus, Hom. 5. PG 12: 329]

St. Cyprian spoke of “Peter... upon whom the Church was founded by the condescendence of the Lord...” [*De Bono Pat.*, 9]

The fourth century Christian poet Juvenius attempted to adapt Christ’s words to Peter into Latin poetry: “You bear the name of *Peter* with worthy strength, and in this mass, and the strength of the rock, I shall build a temple destined to abide with everlasting walls.” [*Hist. Evang.* Bk. III]

St. Basil [c. 370] said that Peter, “on account of the pre-eminence of his faith, received on himself the building of the Church.” [*Against Eunomius* II, 4. PG 29: 577]

Another text attributed to St. Basil the Great [c. 370] says:

The house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the foundations of which are on the holy mountains, [is] built upon the foundation of Apostles and Prophets. One of these mountains also was Peter, upon which rock the Lord promised to build His Church. [*On Isaiah, II.* PG 30: 233]

St. Gregory of Nazianzen remarks, “you see that of the disciples of Christ, who were all great and worthy of election, one is called Rock and is entrusted with the Foundations of the Church...” [Or. 32. PG 36: 193]

Gregory of Nazianzen also called Peter “that unbroken rock, who had the key.” [*Poem. Moral. in laud. Virg.* PG 37: 559]

St. Gregory of Nyssa said, in one oration:

Peter, head of the apostles, is commemorated, and the other members of the Church are glorified with him. The Church of God is strengthened, for he is, according to the gift given him by the Lord, the unbroken and most firm rock upon which the Lord built the Church. [*Alt. Or. de S. Steph.* PG 46: 733]

St. Asterius, bishop of Amasea in Pontus [c. 385], delivered a homily on Saints Peter and Paul, where he commented about Peter’s commission to feed the sheep. Acclaiming Peter as the “sacred head,” Asterius added:

To this man the Savior committed, as a special trust, the catholic and universal Church, having asked him three times, “lovest thou me?” And when he, with great alacrity, answered each question with so many professions [of love], he received the care of the world, as one flock, one shepherd, having heard, “Feed my lambs,” and the Lord gave that most faithful disciple virtually in his own place as a father, shepherd and teacher to the new converts... [PG 40: 281]

God endowed none of His disciples with gifts like

Peter, but having elevated him with heavenly gifts, He set him above all... as first disciple and greater among the brethren... [PG 40: 273]

The only-begotten... names Peter the foundation of the Church...“other foundation no man can lay but that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus.” But He also graced His first disciple with an appellation like His own, naming him a rock of the faith. Through Peter, therefore... the firmness of the Churches is preserved incapable of falling and unbending... [Peter] is called rock of faith, foundation and substructure of the Church of God. [PG 40: 268]

...He receives also, by promise, the keys of the kingdom, and becomes master of its gates, so as to open them to whom he wishes, and to close them against those to whom they ought to be shut— against the profane and unholy, and those who deny that confession by which, as a careful guardian of the wealth of the Churches, he was ordained to have the presidency over the entrance to the Kingdom. [PG 40: 280–81]

St. Epiphanius, bishop of Salamis in Cyprus [c. 400], wrote:

And the blessed Peter, who for a while denied the Lord, Peter who was the chiefest of the apostles, he who became unto us truly a firm rock establishing faith in the Lord, upon which [rock] the Church is built in every respect— first of all, because he confessed that Christ was the Son of the living God, and heard that upon this rock of firm faith I will build my Church... Further, he then also became a firm rock of the building, and foundation of the house of God in that, after denying Christ and being again converted, he was found by the Lord and found worthy to hear, “Feed my sheep and feed my lambs.” [*Haer.* 59. PG 41: 1029]

Holy men, who have made within themselves a dwelling for God's holy Spirit, shall be called the temple of God, as the chiefest [*koruphaiotatos*] of the apostles bears witness... This was befitting for the first of the apostles, that firm rock upon which the Church of God is built, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. The 'gates of hell' are the heresies and heresiarchs. For in every way the faith was strengthened in the one who received the key of heaven, the one who looses on earth and binds in heaven... He was entrusted with the flock, and leads the way beautifully in the power of his own Master. [*Anchor*. II, 9. PG 43: 31-4]

In the Latin Church, Paulus Orosius, a disciple of both Jerome and Augustine [c. 420], called Peter the "rock of the foundation of the Church," and the rock on which the Church was founded. [PL 31: 1192 sq.]

Why the Lord Rebuked Peter

Although Peter, by a special revelation from the Father, confessed the divinity of Jesus, he had not yet understood the mystery of the Redemption, the mystery of the Cross. When Jesus explained the mystery of His passion, Peter had objected: "Lord, far be this from thee. This shall never befall thee." Upbraiding Peter, Jesus had answered: "Get behind me, Satan, thou art a scandal to me." In his commentary on the Psalms, St. Augustine, alluding to this passage, asked:

And the Lord to him, to whom a little earlier He had said, "Blessed art thou, and upon this rock I shall build my church," said, "Get behind me, satan; thou art a scandal to me." Why then is he 'satan,' who a little earlier was 'blessed' and a 'rock'? [*In Ps. 55*. PL 36: 656-7]

The term used by Jesus means *adversary*, and Peter's ill-considered remark had made him just that: an adversary of the Redemption. So sharp a rebuke, however, did not negate the office which Peter was going to exercise in the Church, as St. Hilary, bishop of Poitiers [c. 350], explains:

For when He had spoken certain things to His disciples about His passion, and Peter had found this abhorrent, as unworthy of the Son of God— Peter, to whom He had earlier given the keys of the kingdom of heaven, upon whom He was going to build the Church against which the gates of hell could in no wise prevail, who— whatsoever he should bind or loose on earth would persist as either loosed or bound— this Peter, then, who was abhorring the mystery of the passion, He upbraided: “Get behind me, Satan, thou art a scandal to me.” So sacred was His care about suffering for the salvation of the human race that He addressed by the odious name of ‘Satan’ [i.e., Adversary] Peter, the first confessor of the Son of God, foundation of the Church, doorkeeper of the kingdom of heaven, and in his earthly judgment the judge of heaven. [In Ps. 131. PL 9: 730]

Augustine’s Retractation

In his commentaries on the Psalms and the Gospel of John, Augustine sometimes gave the name of ‘Rock’ to Peter, for example:

...Peter, who a little earlier had confessed [Jesus] as the Son of God, and in that confession had been called the Rock upon which the Church was to be built. [In Ps. 69. PL 36: 869]

When therefore [Jesus] had said to His disciples, “Will you also go away?” Peter, that rock, [said] with the voice of all... [Tr. 11 in Jn. PL 35: 1478]

In *De Agone Christiano*, St. Augustine endeavored to refute various schismatics, including a sect of the “pure,” writing:

...neither let us listen to those who deny that the Church of God can forgive all sins. Wretched are they, accordingly, as they do not understand in Peter the rock, and are unwilling

to believe that the keys of the kingdom of heaven were given to the Church; they themselves have lost them from their hands... [CSEL 41: 135-6]

St. Augustine re-evaluated his works and modified some opinions in his *Retractions*, where he wrote:

I said somewhere, regarding the apostle Peter, that the Church was founded upon him as upon a rock. This meaning is also sung, by the mouth of the many, in the verses of the most blessed Ambrose, where, speaking of the domestic cock, he says: 'As it sings, *the very rock of the Church* [Peter] washes away his fault.' But I know that later on, I most often explained what was said by the Lord: 'Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church,' to be understood as referring to him whom Peter confessed when he said, 'Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God,' and thus Peter, named after this rock, would figure the person of the Church, which is built upon this rock and has received the keys of the kingdom of heaven. For it was not said to him, 'Thou art rock,' but 'Thou art Peter.' Now the rock was Christ, having confessed whom—as the whole Church confesses Him—Simon was named Peter. *Whichever of these two interpretations is more probably correct, let the reader choose.* [Retr. I, 21. PL 32: 618]

Peter, Foundation of the Church After Christ

Although Christ Jesus is the true and divine foundation of the Church, the Church, in a different sense, was also built upon Simon Peter. St. Zeno, an African who became bishop of Verona [c. 360] spoke of "Simon, on whom [Christ] built His Church." [Tr. XIII, PL 11: 251]

St. Cyril of Alexandria [412-444], commenting on Jn. 1, 42, where Andrew brought his brother Simon to meet Jesus, remarked:

He allows him no longer to be called Simon, already exercising authority and power over him, as being of His house, but changes [his name] to Peter [rock], for upon him was He about to found His Church. [PG 73: 220]

St. Proclus of Constantinople, in his homily on the Transfiguration, uttered this comment on Peter's words to Christ: "If it is good for us to be on earth, in vain have you been called the keybearer of heaven... If you wish to raise a tent [on earth], do not be, and do not be called, foundation of the Church." [PG 65: 768]

Peter is the Rock Because Christ is the True Rock

Nothing is more unbiblical than the notion that creatures subsist by their own strength. Simon Peter is no exception; all of his strength comes from Christ, who gave it. In the Old Testament, Yahweh, the true God, was often described as a Rock, and in the New Testament Jesus, the Son of God, is also called a Rock. These considerations led some of the Fathers to observe that Peter is the Rock because Christ is the true Rock.

St. Gregory of Nyssa remarked:

...with his whole soul, [Simon] joins himself with the Lamb, and by the change of name he is transformed by the Lord into something more divine, instead of Simon being both called and having become Peter... The great Peter did not reach such a grace by advancing little by little, but at once he listened to his brother, believed in the Lamb, was completed by faith, and having cleaved to the Rock, became Peter [Rock]. [Hom. 15 in Cant. PG 44: 1088]

St. Jerome pointed out that Peter is called "Rock" derivatively from Christ. [PL 26: 121-2] St. Ambrose made a similar remark. [In Lk. I, 6]

St. Prosper of Aquitaine, a disciple of Augustine, called Peter "this most firm rock, which from that principal rock received a communion of

both His power and His name.” [*De Voc. Gent.* II, 28. PL 51: 714]

St. Leo the Great depicted Christ as explaining His words to Peter thus:

...although I am the inviolable rock, I am the cornerstone who make the two to be one, yet you too, who are solidified by My power, are a rock, so that the things which are proper to Me by My power are common to you by participation with Me. [Sermon 83. PL 54: 430]

St. Maximus, bishop of Turin [c. 450], expresses a similar thought:

This is Peter, to whom Christ freely granted a participation in His name. For as “the rock was Christ,” as the apostle Paul taught [I Cor. X], even so through Christ Peter became a rock, as the Lord says to him: “Thou art Peter and upon this rock I shall build my Church.” [Hom 63. PL 57: 394]

St. Peter Chrysologus speaks of Peter’s “principality” within the apostolic college:

...Peter received his name from the ‘rock,’ because he first merited to establish the Church, by reason of his steadfastness of faith...let Peter hold his ancient principality of the apostolic choir. Let him open the kingdom of heaven to those who are entering it; let him bind the guilty with authority and absolve the penitent with clemency. [Sermon 154. PL 52: 608]

Venerable Bede, glory of the British church [c. 700], also expressed this idea:

Peter, who was previously called Simon, owing to the strength of his faith and the constancy of his confession received from the Lord the name of Peter, because with a

firm and unyielding mind he adhered to Him of whom it was written: “*and the rock was Christ.*” [I Cor. 10] “And upon this rock”— that is, upon the Lord the Savior, who gave a share in His name to him who faithfully knew, loved and confessed Him, so that he should be called Peter from *petra* [rock]: upon which rock the Church is built, because only by faith and love of Christ, by the reception of Christ’s sacraments, [and] by observance of Christ’s commands is it possible to reach the lot of the elect and eternal life. [PL 94: 222]

St. Bede added that although the power of binding and loosing might appear to have been given to Peter alone, it was undoubtedly given to the other apostles also. Citing the words: “*Whose sins you shall have forgiven, they have been forgiven, whose sins you shall have retained, they have been retained,*” [Jn. 20], Bede remarked that “the same office is entrusted to every church in the bishops and priests,” and concluded:

Yet therefore did Blessed Peter, who confessed Christ with true faith and followed Him with true love, receive in a special manner the keys of the kingdom of heaven and the principality of judicial authority, so that all believers throughout the world might understand that whoever separate themselves in any way from the unity of his faith or fellowship, such can neither be absolved from the bonds of their sins nor enter the door of the heavenly kingdom. [PL 94: 222-3]

Peter, More Eminent than the Rest

The fathers frequently remarked that Simon Peter’s dignity excelled that of the other apostles. For example, Origen wrote:

What in a previous passage was granted to Peter alone, seems here [Mt. 18, 18] to be granted to all... But, as it was fit—even though something in common was spoken of Peter

and of those who should thrice admonish the brethren-- that Peter should have something peculiar above [the rest], *this was previously ordained separately respecting Peter, thus: "I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven"* ...and truly, if we sedulously attend to the evangelical writings, even in them we may discover— with regard to those things which seem to be common and [the rest]... —*much difference and preeminence in the words spoken to Peter, beyond those spoken to in the first place.* [Tom. III in Mt. PG 13: 1179–82]

St. Cyril, bishop of Jerusalem [c. 375], showed that Peter had confessed Christ by a special revelation from the Father, remarking:

Peter, the leader [*protostates*] of the apostles, and chief herald of the Church, not using language of his own devising or persuaded by reasoning of man, but with his understanding enlightened by the Father, says to Him, "Thou art the Christ..." [Cat. XI, 3. PG 33: 693]

Ambrosiaster also alludes to Peter's position, commenting on Paul's visit to Peter:

It was fitting that [Paul] should desire to see Peter, because he was first among the apostles, to whom the Savior had delegated the care of the churches. [In Gal. 1, 18. PL 17: 344]

St. Augustine called Peter the "first and principal one [*primo et praecipuo*] in the order of apostles," "holding the principality of the apostleship." [Serm. 76. PL 38: 480–81]

St. Augustine opined that "certain things which appear to pertain properly to Peter," such as the words "I shall give to thee the keys..." "have an illustrious meaning only when referred to the Church," of which Peter bore the figure, "because of the primacy which he had among the disciples." [Enarr. in Ps. 108, 1. PL 37: 1431–32]

Peter, the Keybearer

St. Optatus, bishop of Milevis [c. 370], remarked that “Blessed Peter... merited both to be preferred before all the apostles, and he alone received the keys of the kingdom of heaven, to be communicated to the rest.” [*De Schism. Don.* VII, 3. PL 11: 1087]

Pope Leo the Great described the “power of the keys” as the *supreme power of binding and loosing*, of making authoritative declarations about the Christian Law. Although the power of binding and loosing was granted to all the apostles, Pope Leo declared, it cannot be lawfully exercised without the consent of Simon Peter:

The right of using this authority passed on to the other apostles, but what is intimated to all is, not without reason, commended to one. For this [authority] is singularly entrusted to Peter, because the form of Peter is set before all the rulers of the Church. The privilege of Peter remains, therefore, wherever judgment is passed through his equity, nor is there either excessive severity or remission where nothing shall be bound, nothing loosed, except what Blessed Peter shall have either bound or loosed. [Sermon 83. PL 54: 430]

Many Fathers represented Peter as the keybearer of heaven, the apostle who controlled the entrance to the heavenly realm. Prudentius, the fourth century Spanish Christian poet, alluded to this aspect of Peter’s dignity:

Here [at Rome] reign the two princes of the apostles: the one called the Gentiles. The other, possessing the first chair, throws open the gates of eternity that have been entrusted to him. [*Peristephanon*, II. PL 60: 324]

Didymus the Blind, head of the catechetical school of Alexandria [c. 375], also touched on this subject:

The keys to the kingdom of heaven were given to

him [Peter] so that, “baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,” he might open God’s kingdom to those who so believe as he [Peter] answered [Christ], and as he and the other apostles heard from Christ, whereas to those who do not so glorify [God], Peter shuts the thrice-blessed and most desired entrance. [*De Trin.* I, 30. PG 39: 417]

St. Ambrose depicted Peter as pointing out the way to eternal life:

He is that same Peter to whom He said, “Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church.” Therefore where Peter is, there is the Church; where the Church is, there is no death but eternal life. And therefore He added: “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it: and I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven.” Blessed Peter, against whom the gate of hell did not prevail, nor was the gate of heaven shut to him, but who, on the contrary, destroyed the vestibules of hell and opened the heavenly ones... [In Ps. 40, no. 30]

In a passage preserved by Photius in the *Bibliotheca*, St. Eulogius, patriarch of Alexandria [c. 590], taught, “Neither to John, nor to any other of the disciples, did our Savior say, ‘I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven,’ but to Peter.” [PG 104: 327]

St. Cyril of Jerusalem [c. 375] called Peter “foremost of the apostles and the key-bearer of the kingdom of heaven,” [Cat. 17, 27] remarking that Peter “carries the keys of heaven” [Cat. VI, 15. PG 33: 564].

St. Gregory of Nazianzen called Peter “highest [*akros*] of the apostles,” [PG 37: 1182] and St. Gregory of Nyssa remarked that “through Peter, [Christ] gave to bishops the key of the supercelestial honors.” [*De castig.* PG 46: 312]

Peter, Supreme Shepherd After Christ

St. Peter did not merely receive a greater eminence among the

Keys Over the Christian World

apostles; he was truly the supreme shepherd of the Church, leader of the apostolic band. Origen may be alluding to this point in the following passage, which was preserved in Latin:

When the highest authority [*summa rerum*] with regard to feeding the sheep was handed over to Peter, the profession of no other virtue but love was required of him. [On Romans, BkV, 10. PG 14: 1053]

Origen also describes Peter as the head of the apostles [Hom. 17 in Lk.], as having “more honor than the rest” [Tom. XXII in Jn., 5] and as “greater than the other disciples.” [Tom. XIII in Mt., 14]

Early in the fourth century, Peter, bishop of Alexandria, called Peter “the chosen one [*prokritos*] of the apostles.” [Canon 9. PG 18: 483–6]

Eusebius of Caesarea called Peter “That powerful and great one of the apostles, who on account of his excellence was the leader of all the rest.” [HE II, 14]

Ambrosiaster characterized Peter as shepherd of the entire Church:

After the Savior all were included in Peter, for He established him as their head, that he might be the shepherd of the Lord’s flock...And he says to Peter, “Behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail, and do you, being converted, confirm your brethren.” What doubt is there? Did He pray for Peter, but not for James and John, to say nothing of the rest? Clearly, all were contained in Peter: for in praying for Peter, He is recognized to have prayed for all, *for a people is always either rebuked or praised in the one who is set over it.*” [Question 75. PL 35: 2270]

St. Ambrose taught:

...Peter is set over the Church, after he was tempted by the devil. And therefore the Lord signifies beforehand what it means, that He later chose him as pastor of the Lord's flock. For to him He said, "But thou, when thou hast been converted, confirm thy brethren." [*In Ps. 43*. PL 14: 1163]

In letter 36, St. Augustine mentions a certain Roman writer who insisted that all Christians fast on Saturday because "*Peter, head of the apostles, doorkeeper of heaven and foundation of the Church so taught the Romans.*" Without questioning this premise, Augustine urges tolerance for different customs about fasting, and asks with gentle irony: "Did the other apostles, in opposition to Peter, teach Christians throughout the world to break the fast on Saturday?" [PL 33: 145]

St. Cyril of Alexandria [412-444], commenting on Christ's words in Mt. 16, wrote: "He promises to found the Church, attributing unshakeability to it, as He is the Lord of powers, and over it He places Peter as shepherd." [PG 72: 424]

An inscription on an artifact sent to Rome by the Spanish king Chintila, in 638, says that Peter was "set before all the disciples of the Lord because of love." [Hubner, *Inscriptionum Hispaniae Christianarum Supplementum*, Berlin 1900, 75]

Peter, Prince of the Apostles

Many ancient Latin authors referred to Peter as "prince of the apostles." The list includes:

—The author of the ancient third-century treatise *On Rebaptism*, which calls Peter "the leader and prince of the apostles." [PL 3: 1242]

—The priest Faustinus, c. 380. [*De Trinitate*, 5. PL 13: 71]

—Salvian, a fifth century priest of Gaul. [*De Dei Gubern.* VI, 1. PL 53: 108]

Keys Over the Christian World

—Sedulius, the fifth century poet and priest. [*In Gal.* II]

—Pope Pelagius I [556–560]. [Ep. 6, PL Suppl. 4: 1286]

—The Second Council of Braga, in 572. [PL 84: 570]

—Pope Pelagius II [579–590], in his third letter to the bishops of Istria. [ACO IV, Vol. 2, 119]

—St. Gregory the Great [590–604], in his epistles, regularly gives this title to Peter. So does Pope St. Leo II [681–682].

—Jonas the abbot, in his *Lives* of Saints Columban, Eustasius, Bertulf and Burgundofara. [PL 87: 1044, 1049, 1063, 1078]

—Several other saints' lives from the Merovingian and Carolingian periods mention the title or churches and basilicas in honor of St. Peter, prince of the apostles, for example St. Audoenus in the *Life of St. Eligius* [Ch. 17. PL 87, 551], the *Life* of St. Austraberta, the *Life* of St. Walafred, the *Life* of St. Leonard [c. 700], and the early medieval *Life* of St. Eleutherius, bishop of Tournai [c. 500]. The late sixth century *Life* of St. Agilus mentions that St. Audoenus had built a church in honor of St. Peter, prince of the apostles, and that he celebrated the feast of the Chair of Peter at Antioch on February 22. [A.S. 4: 423, 844 and 5: 187. Vol. 39: 584–6. Vol. 54: 47]

—The early seventh-century *Life* of St. Maurus as well as the *Life* of St. Salvius. [A.S. 1: 704, 1047]

—Kings Coenwallha of Wessex [c. 670], Hlodhar of Kent [675], Aethilred of Mercia [691], Wihtred of Kent [696], Aethilbald of Mercia [716–743], Eanberht of the Hwiccas [757], Eadberht of Kent [761], Offa of Mercia [774], and Milred, bishop of the Hwiccas, in various charters. [Kemble, *Codex Diplomaticus Aevi Saxonici* 1: 12, 35, 48, 108, 123, 131, 150, 152; Vol. 5: 13]

—St. Bede, in *Vita Beatorum Abbatum*, ch. 1, 2, 22. [Ed. J. Stevenson,

Venerabilis Bedae Opera Historica Minora, London 1841: 139–41, 161]

—The *Life* of St. Guthlac [c. 720, in *A.S.* 10: 40].

—The *Life* of St. Paldo the Abbot. [*A.S.* 52: 656]

—Alcuin, the English scholar and liturgist who became prominent in Charlemagne’s court. [Ep. to Leo III and *Life* of St. Vedastus in *A.S.* 3: 796]

—Eddius Stephanus, in the *Life of Wilfrid*, 3. [Ed. Colgrave, p. 8, *passim*]

St. Jerome, in the opening of *De Viris Illustribus*, writes that “Simon Peter, prince of the apostles, after the episcopate of the Church of Antioch... went to Rome, and there, for twenty-five years, held the sacerdotal chair.” [PL 23: 638]

Blessed John Cassian also called Peter the prince of the apostles. [*De Incarnatione* III, 12]

St. Avitus, bishop of Vienne [c. 500] called Peter “the head of the apostles, that is, prince of the princes.” [Fragment I. PL 59: 295]

An ancient apologetical writer, Zacchaeus [c. 400?], remarked that the Novatians did not have the “legitimate principality of the priesthood,” or the “supreme see in the pontificate.” Defending the Church’s power to remit sins, Zacchaeus cited the power of binding and loosing given to “Peter, into whose person the dignity of all bishops is gathered together.” [*Consult.* II, 17–18. PL 20: 1140–42]

Peter, Coryphaeus or Leader of the Apostolic Choir

Traditionally the Greek Fathers called Peter the *coryphaeus* or *koruphaios*. According to Liddell and Scott, a standard Greek lexicon, *koruphaios*, a term taken from Attic drama, refers to the leader of the chorus, and means “foremost man, leader, chief.” [Oxford University Press 1993, s.v.]

Keys Over the Christian World

Very often when Latin and Greek parallel texts of ecclesiastical documents exist, *coryphaeus of the apostles* appears as the Greek equivalent of the Latin phrase, “prince of the apostles,” for example in acts of ecumenical councils. Greek Fathers who call Peter the *coryphaeus* include:

—Eusebius of Caesarea. [In Ps. 68. PG 23: 737]

—St. Athanasius. [In Ps. 15]

—St. Epiphanius, bishop of Salamis in Cyprus. [Tom. II in Anchor. 9.]

—St. Macarius of Egypt. [*De Patientia*, 3. PG 34: 868]

—St. John Chrysostom, bishop of Constantinople [c. 400], as cited below.

—St. Cyril, bishop of Alexandria, c. 430. [PG 77: 1025]

—Isidore of Pelusium, c. 430. [Ep. Bk. I, 142, Bk. II, 48]

—St. Gregory of Nyssa. [*Alt. Orat. de S. Steph.*]

—The *Acts of St. Nicetas*. [A.S. 44: 40]

—Paul of Emesa. “*Coryphaeus* of the apostles, the mouth of the disciples, Peter.” [PG 77:1437]

—St. Proclus, bishop of Constantinople [434–446] says: “Come, O *coryphaeus* of the disciples, and president [*prostata*] of the apostles...” [Homily on the Transfiguration. PG 65: 765]

—Basil, bishop of Seleucia in Isauria [c. 450], calls Peter the *coryphaeus* of the apostles and president [*prostates*] of the disciples of Christ. [Orat. XVII. PG 85: 217]

—Theodoret, bishop of Cyrus in Palestine [c. 450]. [*In Ps. 2.*]

—Barsanuphius and John, spiritual masters of Dorotheus of Gaza. [*Questions and answers*. PO 31: 515]

—John Moschus. [*Pratum Spirituale*, 148. PG 87: 3013]

—St. Sophronius of Jerusalem, in his synodical letter. [PG 87:3189]

—St. Nicephorus, patriarch of Constantinople [c. 815]. [Mansi 14: 45]

St. Nilus [c. 425] calls Peter president or *protostates* of the apostles, adding that Christ forgave Peter's fall and made him "shepherd of the entire world." [Epp. Bk. II: 21, 75. PG 79: 208] St. Nilus also calls Peter the chosen one or "*prokritos* of the apostles, who always ruled (*hegemoneusas*) among them." [*On Voluntary Poverty*, 8. PG 79: 980]

St. Cyril of Alexandria refers to Peter as the "leader of the holy disciples," [PG 77: 573-576], the pre-eminent one, and so on. [PG 74: 137]

The *Life* of St. Eutychius, patriarch of Constantinople, remarks that Eutychius "fed the rational flock of Christ, which the Chief Shepherd himself commended to Peter, *coryphaeus* of the apostles, saying, "if you love me... feed my lambs." [PG 86: 2312]

Leontius of Byzantium uses the superlative in one sermon, calling Peter *koruphaiotaton*, or "chiefest." [Sermon I. PG 86: 1977]

St. Theodore the Studite associated the concepts of 'keys,' 'rock' and 'coryphaeus,' remarking:

I have learned that at Rome, they carry with honor the keys of the *coryphaeus* of the apostles, Peter. And the Lord indeed did not give him material keys, but spiritual ones for binding and loosing. They have made [keys] out of silver, and display them for veneration. Such is their faith. There [at Rome] has the immovable rock of faith been placed as

the foundation, according to the word of the Lord... [Cat. 15. Mai, *Nova Patrum Bibliotheca* 9:37]

Peter, Foundation of Apostolic Unity

Peter was established as head of the apostles so as to secure the unity of the Church and the cohesion of the apostolic college itself. St. Jerome shows that even if every other unique power of Peter were minimized or explained away, this prerogative remains:

...But you say that the Church is founded upon Peter: although in another passage this is attributed to all the apostles, and they all receive the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and the strength of the Church is solidified upon them equally, *among the twelve one is still chosen so that, with the establishment of a head, the occasion of schism may be removed...* [*Adv. Jov.* I, 26. PL 23: 258]

St. Pacian, bishop of Barcelona [c. 375], in a long letter to Sympronianus the Novatian, remarks that “The Lord spoke to Peter, to one, so that He might establish unity from one.” [Ep. III, 2. PL 13: 1071]

St. Augustine also explains that Christ chose Peter as a commendation of unity:

With reason also, after the resurrection, did Christ commend His sheep to Peter to be fed: but when Christ speaks to one, unity is commended, and in the first place to Peter, because among the apostles Peter is first. [Sermon 295. PL 38: 1350]

Peter in Greek Hymnography

The Greek Church celebrated the feast of the chains of St. Peter on January 16. The texts venerate Peter as the *coryphaeus*, “rock of the faith,” “key-bearer” “protothrone,” and “law-giver, shepherd and teacher of Christ’s

flock.” [Menaion, Athens 1979, January, 138-45]

Cardinal Pitra edited other Greek texts for this feast which include these titles and the superlative *koruphaiotatos*, “most eminent, chiefest, highest,” “rock and unshakeable basis of the Church,” “foundation of all the faithful,” and “unshaken basis of dogmas.” [*Hymnographie de l’Eglise Grecque*, Rome 1867, pp. XX, XXI, XXIII, XXVII, XXXVII, XXIX, XLII-XLIV, XLVI]

Texts for the feast of Ss. Peter and Paul, on June 29, refer to Peter as the leader [*prostates*] of the Church, the “great president,” to whom Christ “first entrusted the helm of the Church.” [Pitra, LXXIII, LXXVI]

Texts for the commemoration of all the apostles, on June 30, call Peter the “foundation of all the faithful,” “exarch of the apostles,” and “divine and sacred head.” [Ed. J.B. Pitra, *op. cit.*, XIII, XVII]

A tenth century Byzantine Menology, published by B. Latysev, is strikingly reminiscent of the thinking of St. John Chrysostom. On June 29, feast of saints Peter and Paul, it has the following notice about St. Peter, alluding to his fall and restoration:

...and see, he learns to be patient to sinners, and he receives simply the diocese of the whole world... [*Menologii Anonymi Byzantini Saeculi X Quae Supersunt*. Petropolis, 1911-1912. Fasc. II, 115]

An Armenian Synaxarion attributed to Catholicos Gregory VII of Anawarza [c. 1300] commemorates, on 9 Aratz [January 6], a feast in honor of the chains of Peter, “head of the apostles and rock of the Church.” The Georgian Synaxarion calls Peter “head of the apostles,” and includes an account of his martyrdom in Rome. [PO 19: 46, 734]

Among Egyptian sources, an early seventh-century formula of union between the monophysite patriarchs Athanasius of Antioch and Anastasius of Alexandria remarks that God made a promise, “saying to the chosen one

and head of the apostles, Peter: "Thou art a rock, and upon it I shall build my church..." [Chronicle of Michael the Syrian, Bk X, 26. Ed. J. Chabot, 2: 284]

The Coptic Synaxarion calls Peter "head of the apostles." [PO 16: 313] A notice for the feast of Ss. Peter and Paul on 5 Abib, or June 29, reads:

...when [the Lord] chose Peter, He made him first of the disciples... [Peter] confessed, like all the others: "Thou art the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Then the Lord gave him the best part, established him as cornerstone of the Church and delivered to him the keys of the kingdom of heaven... [PO 17: 622-3]

The Coptic Synaxarion commemorates Peter's confession of faith on 7 Mesore, or July 31, noting that after Peter confessed Jesus as the Son of God,

...the Lord gave him felicity, delivered to him the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and conferred on him the power of loosing and binding. On this day, Peter became the head of the disciples, and his lieutenant [sic] at Rome, for the authority over all the heads of the world... [PO 17: 710]

On 5 Hamle [July 12], the Ethiopian Synaxarion commemorates St. Peter with this notice:

...the martyrdom of the two great apostles, heads of the apostles, Peter and Paul... When Peter was chosen, he was established head of the apostles... He had faith [and] an ardent zeal and love for our Lord; thus did our Lord establish him head of the apostles... Peter confessed his faith before them all, saying: "Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God." Then our Lord proclaimed him blessed, established him as the fundamental rock of the Christian church, and gave him the keys of the kingdom of heaven..." [PO 7: 232-3]

The Ethiopian Synaxarion also commemorates St. Peter on 7 Nahase [August 13], in these terms:

...feast of the illustrious apostle Peter, head of the apostles. In effect, it was on this day that he said that the Christ was the Son of the Lord... This is why Our Lord declared him blessed and gave him the keys of the kingdom of heaven, for loosing and binding. Since this day, the apostle Peter became the head of all the apostles, and he holds Our Lord's place in the city of Rome. He is established over all the princes of the world, the patriarchs, metropolitans, bishops, priests, deacons, and the entire priestly clerical order... [PO 9: 281-2]

Peter and Paul, Coryphaei or Leaders of the Apostles

In the tradition of the Church, Saints Peter and Paul enjoy a certain distinction within the apostolic choir: they are the leaders or “chiefest” of the apostles. Several fathers use this language; for example Venantius Fortunatus, the Latin hymnographer, proclaimed:

[Paul] was more learned in his admonitions; [Peter] was higher in rank. The hearts of men are opened, by one, and the very heavens by the other... the one opens the way to heaven by his teachings, the other by the key. [*Miscellanea* III, 7. PL 88: 126]

Peter was prince by virtue of the key; Paul was also first by his teaching. [*Miscellanea* IX, 2. PL 88: 299]

St. Maximus of Turin describes Saints Peter and Paul as “the most glorious princes of the Christian faith” and “most reverend fathers of all the churches,” adding that, by a certain peculiar prerogative, they have a greater eminence and excellence than the other apostles. [Homilies 68 and 72. PL 57: 391, 404]

Maximus adds that Saints Peter and Paul, “princes of all the churches,” suffered on the same day at Rome, which had obtained the principality over the entire world. In this, Maximus discerns a design of Christ’s providence, which willed to “place the princes of His kingdom where the world had the head of its empire.” [Homily 68. PL 57: 396]

Peter, the New Moses

Some fathers drew a comparison between Peter and Moses: as Moses was the leader of God’s people in the Old Testament, Peter is the supreme shepherd in the New. Because both Peter and Moses appeared at the Transfiguration of Jesus, the Fathers sometimes used their homiletical remarks on this feast to draw this parallel.

St. John Damascene did precisely that. Preaching on the Transfiguration, he characterizes Moses as the ‘divine lawgiver,’ and Peter as the ‘chiefest [disciple] of the New Testament.’ [PG 99: 548]

The Damascene added other remarks about Peter’s high dignity, for example:

...secretly He [Jesus] instructs him whom he had predestined to be the worthy president [*proedron*] of the Church. [PG 99: 553]

...[Christ] ordained thee the keybearer of the kingdom of heaven, and gave thee the power of binding and loosing sins... [PG 99: 555]

...He took Peter [on the mountain] as him who was the president [*proedron*], who was also going to take up the helm of the entire Church... [PG 99: 560]

In one sarcophagus in the catacombs, Peter is depicted as receiving the New Law from Christ, Mediator of the New Testament, much as Moses received the Old Law on the mountain. At other times, a figure is represented

striking a rock, a parallel with a biblically recorded event in the life of Moses. A six letter inscription removes all doubt about the figure's identity: *PETRUS*. [Kraus, F.X. *Roma Sotteranea*, Freiburg 1879, 339–40]

Another type of ancient image, the *traditio legis*, depicts Christ handing the scroll of the Law to Peter, while St. Paul watches reverently. In the *traditio clavium*, Christ delivers the keys to St. Peter. [Cf. C. Pietri, *Roma Christiana*, Rome 1976, 1413 sq.]

St. Macarius of Egypt taught that “Moses was succeeded by Peter, who had committed to his hands the new Church of Christ and the true priesthood.” [Hom. 26. PG 34: 690]

In the Latin Church, Augustine boldly makes the same comparison:

Why is it illogical, if Peter, after [wishing to use the sword] became Pastor of the Church, as Moses, after killing the Egyptian, became Ruler of that [Old Testament] Synagogue? [*Contra Faustum*, XXII, 70. PL 42: 445]

St. John Chrysostom on Peter

St. John Chrysostom often spoke of Peter's presidency over the other apostles, for example:

And why, then, passing by the others, does He speak with (Peter) about these things? [Jn. 21, 15] He was the chosen one of the apostles, and mouth of the disciples, and leader [*koruphe*] of the choir. This is also why Paul once went up to see him, rather than the others. [Gal. 1, 18] And to show him that he ought to have confidence, as if the denial were done away with, *He entrusts him with the presidency of the brethren*... And He does not bring forward the denial, or reproach him for what happened, but says, “If you love me, preside over the brethren.” ...A third time He commands the same thing, showing how greatly He honors

the presidency over His own sheep...And if anyone were to say, “How then did James receive the throne of Jerusalem?” I would answer that *He ordained this man [Peter] teacher, not of that throne, but of the world.* [Hom. 88 in Jn. PG 59: 478–80]

Peter, the *coryphaeus* of the choir, mouth of all the apostles, head of that tribe, *prostotes* of the whole world, foundation of the Church, the ardent lover of Christ, for He says: “Peter, lovest thou me more than these?” [On 2 Tim. 3, 1. PG 56, 277]

Peter, the summit [*koruphe*] of the apostles, the first in the Church, the friend of Christ, who received a revelation not from man but from the Father, as the Lord bears witness to him, saying: “Blessed art thou...” This very Peter— and when I say ‘Peter’ I name that unbroken rock, that firm foundation, the great apostle, first of the disciples, the first called and the first who obeyed— he committed no little offense but an exceedingly great one, denying the Master... [Hom 3 *de Eleemos.* PG 49: 298]

...Peter, the foundation of the Church, vehement lover of Christ... who traversed the universe, lay down his net into the sea, and caught the entire world... [*Vidi Dominum*, Hom. IV, 3. PG 56: 123]

...this holy *coryphaeus* of the blessed choir, the lover of Christ, the ardent disciple, who was entrusted with the keys of heaven, who received the spiritual revelation... [Hom. VI on Acts. PG 60: 56]

Peter, the *coryphaeus* of the choir of apostles, mouth of the disciples, the pillar of the church, bulwark of the faith, foundation of the confession, fisherman of the world... the first of the apostles, the foundation of the Church, the *coryphaeus* of the choir of apostles... [*Hom. de decem mille tal.*

3; *ad eos qui scandal. sunt* 17]

Chrysostom depicts Peter as exercising the apostolic primacy at the very beginning of the Church, after Pentecost:

“In those days Peter rose up in the midst of the disciples.” [Acts I, 15] Both as a fervent one, and as entrusted by Christ with the flock... [Peter] is first to act with authority in the matter, as the one entrusted with them all, for to him Christ said: *“And thou, being converted, strengthen thy brethren.”* [Hom. 3 in Acts. PG 60: 33, 37]

Chrysostom also explains that Peter’s fall did not ultimately prevent him from assuming the apostolic primacy:

Peter, the foundation, the pillar... God allowed him to fall, because He was going to make him ruler [*arxonta*] of the entire world so that, remembering his own fall, he might forgive those who fall in the future. And that what I have said is no conjecture, listen to Christ Himself saying: *“Simon, Simon...”* [Hom. *quod frequenter conveniendum sit*, 5. PG 63: 465]

...[when] that *coryphaeus* Peter, after a thousand wonders and signs and so much warning and counsel [had fallen], He [Christ] overlooked it and established him first of the apostles... [In Ps. 129. PG 55: 375]

Finally, in his treatise on the priesthood, Chrysostom observes that Christ entrusted the flock to Peter, “and those who came after him”:

Why did He shed His blood? In order that He might gain possession of those sheep which He entrusted to Peter and those who came after him. [*De Sacerdotio* II, 1. PG 48: 632]

Peter's Fall

The Gospels relate in dramatic fashion how Peter, in a moment of weakness, denied Christ three times. Knowing that Peter was going to fall, Jesus had given him this admonition and warning:

Simon, Simon, behold Satan has desired to have you, that he might sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith may not fail, and do thou, when thou hast been converted, strengthen thy brethren. [Lk. 22, 31-32]

St. Cyril of Jerusalem [c. 375] described Peter's fall in these words:

Peter, the chiefest [*koruphaiotatos*] and foremost [*protostates*] of the apostles, before a little maid denied the Lord three times, but moved to repentance he wept bitterly. [Cat. II, 19. PG 33: 408]

Theodoret [c. 450] remarked that Jesus wanted Peter to show others the same care that he, Peter, had received from Christ:

The first foundation of the Church was shaken, and confirmed by the divine grace...and the Lord commanded him to apply the same medicine [of repentance] to the brethren: "And you," he says, "being converted, strengthen your brethren." [*Haer. fab.* V, 28. PG 83: 552]

"For as I did not despise you when when you were tossed about, so be a support to your brethren in trouble, and grant to others the help by which you were saved, and exhort them not while they are tottering, but raise them up when they are in danger. For this reason I let you slip but not fall, through you gaining stability for those who are tossed." So this great pillar supported the tossing and sinking world, and permitted it not to fall entirely and gave it back stability, having been commanded to feed God's sheep. [*Oratio de*

caritate. PG 82: 1509-12]

Pope Leo the Great explains why Christ showed a special care for Simon Peter. All of the apostles were in need of divine assistance and protection because Satan sought to destroy them all. However, Pope Leo continues, the Lord showed a special providence for Peter:

...a special care is undertaken by the Lord for Peter, and prayer is made expressly for Peter's faith, as if the state of the others would remain more sure *if the ruler's mind remained unconquered*. In Peter, therefore, the strength of all is fortified, and the assistance of divine grace is so ordered that *the firmness, which through Christ is granted to Peter, is through Peter conferred on the apostles*. [Sermon 83. PL 54: 431]

Peter, Shepherd of the Shepherds

When Jesus uttered the threefold command to Peter, "Feed my lambs..." He made Peter shepherd of the entire Church— shepherd of the flock and even of the pastors themselves. Arnobius the Younger [c. 450] taught that after Christ, Peter is *the shepherd par excellence* in the Church:

Behold, a repentant apostle, who is the bishop of bishops, is succoured, and as he weeps a greater rank is restored to him than was taken from him when he denied [Christ]. In order to show this, I point out that no other apostle received the name of 'shepherd.' For only the Lord Jesus Christ said, "I am the Good Shepherd," and again, He says, "My sheep follow me." This holy name, therefore, and the power of the same name, He, after the resurrection, granted to the repentant Peter, and the One Denied bestowed on His denier this power which He alone had, so that he [Peter] might be proven not only to have recovered what he had lost, but also to have acquired even much more by repentance than he had lost by his denial. [*In Ps. 138*. PL 53: 545]

Keys Over the Christian World

Some fathers describe Peter as holding the helm of the entire Church, for example, Maximus of Turin:

How great was Peter's merit before God, that after he had rowed his little boat the helm of the entire Church should be entrusted to him? [Homily 70. PL 57: 399]

St. Ambrose explains that Christ had left Peter as a certain token or representative of His own love:

The Lord asks a question, so as to show, as He was about to be raised to heaven, which one He was leaving to us as a Vicar of His love. For thus you have: "Simon, son of John, do you love me? ...Feed my sheep." ...And therefore because he alone [Peter], out of all, professes this, he is placed before all...And now he is not ordered, as at first, to feed His lambs, but His sheep, *so that the more perfect might govern the more perfect.* [In Luke X, 175-6. PL 15: 1848]

St. Augustine comments strikingly on the close relationship between Christ and Peter:

He [Christ] wanted to make Peter— to whom He commended His sheep as to another self— one with Himself, so that He should commend the sheep to him in such a way that one would be the Head and the other bear the image of the body, that is, the Church. [Sermon 46, 30. PL 38: 287]

St. Peter Chrysologus adds that Christ entrusted His sheep to Peter in His place, before ascending to heaven:

This is why the master himself looks for coadjutors, for associates in the care of the entire world, saying: "Shout unto God, all the earth." This is why, as He is about to return to heaven, He commends His sheep to Peter, so that he [Peter] would feed them in His stead. [Sermon 6 in Ps. 99.

PL 52: 202]

Commenting on the words “feed my sheep,” Pope Leo the Great added:

For after His resurrection also, after [conferring] the keys of the kingdom, after [Peter’s] threefold profession of unending love, the Lord, insinuating a point mystically, said three times: “*Feed my sheep.*” Undoubtedly He does this now as well, and the pious shepherd follows the Lord’s command, confirming us by his exhortations and praying for us incessantly, so that we not be overcome by any temptation... Since therefore we see so great a protection divinely established over us, let us give thanks to our Eternal King and Redeemer, our Lord Jesus Christ, for having given so great a power to him, whom He made ruler of the entire Church... [Sermon 83. PL 54: 432]

St. Hilary, bishop of Poitiers, remarked:

After his confession of the mystery, Blessed Simon, underlying the foundation of the Church, and receiving the keys of the kingdom... [PL 10: 172]

Peter’s confession obtained an utterly worthy reward... Blessed is he, who was praised for having understood and seen what was beyond the power of human eyes: not considering what was of flesh and blood, but noticing the Son of God, by the revelation of the heavenly Father... and judged worthy to be the first to acknowledge what was in the Christ of God. Oh— in your being called by a new name— happy foundation of the Church, and rock worthy of the building up of that which was to dissolve infernal laws, and the gates of hell, and all the enclosures of death! O blessed doorkeeper of heaven, to whose judgment are handed the keys of the entrance into eternity, whose

Keys Over the Christian World

judgment on earth is an authority already settled in heaven,
so that whatever is bound or loosed on earth acquires the
same status in heaven as well. [In Mt. 16. PL 9: 1010]

Hilary also wrote that Peter was “first to believe, and is prince of
the apostolate,” *princeps apostolatus*. [In Mt.VII, 6. PL 9: 956]

Epilogue

The Keys Till the End of Time

The history of the keys began at the walk to Caesarea Philippi, at the beginning of the Christian age, and has continued to the end of the patristic era and the age of the first seven ecumenical councils. From the deference of Ignatius Theophorus, who described the Roman Church as “presiding over love,” to the “more powerful principality” of which the Latin fragment of St. Irenaeus spoke, the acts of the fathers have shown the true position of the Roman Church, from which, as St. Ambrose said so long ago, “the rights of venerable communion flow unto all.”

As the Church proceeded from century to century, and kingdoms and empires came and went, the keys of Simon Peter continued to be passed on to his successors, the Roman Pontiffs. Many of them were men of zeal and holiness, fully worthy of their charge. Over time there were exceptions, and in the tenth century, a series of unworthy pontiffs practiced unprecedented degradations in the city of the Apostolic See. Yet whether the popes were good or bad, the source of their authority was always the same: the keys of Caesarea Philippi, the existence of which Jesus revealed when He promised to build His church “*upon this rock*.”

As long as the Church exists, she will persevere in the truth by virtue of the special assistance of Jesus, who promised to found His church upon a rock, for “*This rock*,” of which Jesus spoke, can never be destroyed by the gates of hell. *This rock* was set in place by Christ Himself. *This rock* will stand until the end of time.

Although the rock of Peter endures, and subsists in the Apostolic See, tragically many baptized Christians, over the centuries, came to be separated from it, in the fifth century, during the monophysite crisis, after

the great eastern schism, and again in the sixteenth century. To their descendants the authors are anxious to speak, for our message is urgent and clamors to be heard.

With the ancient history of the keys complete, our thoughts turn to the first ecumenical council, the canons of which spoke of the privileges of the great eastern sees: Antioch, Alexandria and Jerusalem. We see a day when the Christian east is once again in communion with the Apostolic See, and acknowledging, in the words of St. Peter Chrysologus, that "Blessed Peter, who lives and presides in his own see, grants the truth of faith to those who seek it." That so marvelous a day may come within our lifetime, we pray and hope.

As that great and blessed day approaches, the truth remains and cannot but prevail. The keys of Simon Peter remain in that see which he consecrated in his own blood, and there will they ever remain till the end of time and as long as there is a Church to govern, a Church to bear witness to the Son of God, His divinity, His kingship, His sacrifice and His boundless love for the children of men.

Bibliography

Akopyana, Vasegha. See: *Armenian Book of Canons*.

Ammianus Marcellinus. Text and translation by John C. Rolfe. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA and William Heineman Ltd., London 1956.

Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. Edited and translated by Benjamin Thorpe. *Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores*, (Rolls Series), Vol. 23, Kraus Reprint, 1964.

Anonymi Auctoris Expositio Officiorum Ecclesiae Georgio Arbelensi Vulgo Adscripta. Ed. R.H. Connolly, Louvain 1953.

Aristakes of Lastivert. *Récit des Malheurs de la Nation Armenienne*. Translated by Marius Canard and Haig Berberian. Editions de *Byzantion*, Brussels 1973.

Armenian Book of Canons [in Armenian], ed. Vasegha Akopyana, Armenian Academy, Yerevan 1971.

Assemani, J.S. *Bibliotheca Orientalis*. Rome 1728.

Augustine, Saint. *Lettres 1★—29★*. Nouvelle édition du texte critique et introduction par Iohannes Divjak. *Etudes Augustiniennes*, 1987.

Azarian, Stephen. *Ecclesiae Armenae Traditio de Romani Pontificis Primatu Jurisdictionis et Inerrabili Magisterio*. Rome, 1870.

Babut, E.C. *La Plus Ancienne Decretale*. Paris, 1904.

Bacha, Constantine. *Un traité des Oeuvres Arabes de Theodore Abou-Kurra*. Paris, 1905.

Idem. *Les Oeuvres Arabes de Theodore Aboucara*. Beirut, 1904.

Balgy, A. *Historia Doctrinae Catholicae Inter Armenos, Unionisque Eorum Cum Ecclesia Romana in Concilio Florentino*. Rome, 1877.

Bar Hebraeus. *The Chronography of Gregory Abu'l Faraj, the Son of Aaron, the Hebrew Physician Commonly Known as Bar Hebraeus*. Translated by E.A. Wallis Budge. Oxford University Press, 1932.

Idem. *Chronicon Ecclesiasticum*. Edd. J. Abbeloos and T. Lamy, Louvain 1872–1877.

Idem. *Gregory Abu'l Faraj commonly called Bar-Hebraeus Commentary on the Gospels from the Horreum Mysteriorum*. Translated and edited by Wilmot Eardley W. Carr. London, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1925.

Bar Salibi, Dionysius. *Dionysii bar Salibi Commentarii in Evangelia*. Louvain, 1953–1989.

Barlow, Claude W. *Martini Episcopi Bracarensis Opera Omnia*. Yale University Press, 1950.

Baronius, Caesar. *Caesaris S.R.E. Card. Baronii, Od. Raynaldi et Jac. Laderchii Congregationis Oratorii Presbyterorum Annales Ecclesiastici Denuo Excusi et ad Nostra Usque Tempora Perducti ab Augustino Theiner, Eiusdem Congregationis Presbytero*. Paris, Victor Palme, 1867.

Batiffol, Mgr. Pierre. *Le Siège Apostolique*, Paris 1924, Gabalda.

Bedjan, Paul. *Histoire de Mar Jab-alaha, Patriarche, et de Rabban Sauma*. Paris 1895.

Besson, Joseph, S.J. *La Syrie et la Terre Sainte*. New edition, Paris, Victor Palme, 1862.

Beveridge, William. *Synodicon sive Pandectae Canonum*. Oxford 1672.

Bieler, Ludwig, Ed. *Four Latin Lives of St. Patrick*. Dublin, The Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1971. Volume VIII of the series *Scriptores Latini Hiberniae*.

Idem. *The Patrician Texts in the Book of Armagh*. Dublin, The Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1979. Volume X of the series *Scriptores Latini Hiberniae*.

Bollandists. *Acta Sanctorum*. Antwerp, 1643–.

Braun, Oscar. See: Timothy I, Patriarch of the Nestorians.

Brooks, E.W. *The Sixth Book of the Select Letters of Severus, Patriarch of Antioch*, Oxford 1903.

Brosset, M., ed. *Deux Historiens Arméniens*. Imperial Academy, St. Petersburg 1871.

Chabot, J.B., Ed. *Synodicon Orientale, ou Recueil de Synodes Nestoriens*. Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 1902.

Keys Over the Christian World

Idem. *Documenta ad origines Monophysitarum illustrandas*. Louvain, 1952–1955. CSCO vol. 17, 103. *Scriptores Syri* series 2, vol. 37. *Scriptores Syri* vol. 17, 52.

Idem. *Histoire de Mar Jaballaha*. Paris, Leroux 1895.

Chronicle of Seert. Edited by Bishop Addai Scher. Text in *Patrologia Orientalis*, Vol. IV sq.

Chrysostom, St. John. *Sancti Ioannis Chrysostomi Opera Graece, Octo Voluminibus*. Eton 1610–12.

Colgan, John. *Trias Thaumaturga*. Louvain 1647, Reprint Dublin 1997.

Commissioners for Publishing the Ancient Laws and Institutes of Ireland. *Ancient Laws of Ireland*, Longmans & Co., for Her Majesty's Stationery Office, Dublin and London, 1865–1901.

Conybeare, F.C. *Rituale Armenorum*. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1905.

Coustant, Pierre. *Epistolae Romanorum Pontificum*. Paris, 1721.

Cureton, William. *Ancient Syriac Documents*. Reprint, Oriental Press, Amsterdam 1967.

Dararan [Armenian Hymnal]. Constantinople, 1738.

David, Joseph. *Antiqua Ecclesiae Syro-Chaldaicae Traditio circa Petri Apostoli eiusque successorum Romanorum Pontificum Divinum Primatum*. Rome, Sacred Congregation De Propaganda Fide, 1870.

De Rossi, G.B. *Inscriptiones Christianae Urbis Romae Septimo Saeculo Antiquiores*. Rome, 1867–1888.

Diehl, Ernestus. *Inscriptiones Latinae Christianae Veteres*. Weidmanns, Berlin 1925.

Dowsett, C.J.F See: Movses Dasxuranci.

Duchesne, Mgr. Louis. *The Churches Separated from Rome*. English Edition Benziger Brothers 1907.

Dulaurier, Edouard. *Bibliothèque Historique Arménienne*. Paris, 1858.

Idem. *Récueil des Historiens des Croisades. Documents Arméniens*. Paris, Imprimerie Imperiale, 1869.

Dvornik, F. *Les Legendes de Constantin et de Methode Vues de Byzance*, second edition, Academic International, Hattiesburg, Mississippi, 1969.

Eddius Stephanus. *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid*. Latin text edited, translated and annotated by Bertram Colgrave. Cambridge University Press 1927, reprinted 1985.

Egbert, archbishop of York [732-766]. Ed. W. Greenwell. *The Pontifical of Egbert, Archbishop of York, A.D. 732-766*. Surtees Society publications, Vol. XXVII, London 1853.

Ephraem, Saint. Ed. G. Moesinger, *Evangelii Concordantis Expositio Facta a Sancto Ephraemo Doctore Syro*, Venice 1876.

Idem. Ed. G. Vossius. *Sancti Ephraem Syri Patris et Scriptoris Ecclesiae Antiquissimi et Dignissimi Opera Omnia*. Cologne, 1670.

Idem. Ed. Assemani. *Sancti Patris Nostri Ephraem Syri Opera Omnia Quae Exstant, Graece, Syriace, et Latine in sex tomos distributa*. Rome, 1732-1746.

Eusebius of Caesarea. *The Ecclesiastical History*. Greek text with translation by J.E.L. Oulton. Harvard University Press, 1957.

Forget, Iacobus, ed. *Synaxarium Alexandrinum*. Louvain, 1953.

Galanus, Clemens. *Conciliatio Ecclesiae Armenae cum Romana*. Rome, *Propaganda Fide*, 1658.

Garitte, Gerard, ed. *La Narratio de Rebus Armeniae. Edition critique et commentaire*. Louvain, 1952.

Giamil, Samuel. *Genuinae Relationes Inter Sedem Apostolicam et Assyriorum seu Chaldeorum Ecclesiam*. Rome 1902.

Giles, E., ed. *Documents Illustrating Papal Authority*. London, Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, 1952.

Graffin, R., Nau, F. Edd. *Patrologia Orientalis*. Paris, 1907-.

Graffin, R. *Patrologia Syriaca*. Paris 1894.

Greek-English Lexicon. (Abridged edition of Liddell and Scott Greek-English Lexicon). Oxford University Press, 1993.

Keys Over the Christian World

Gregory of Narek. *Livre de Prières*, translated by Isaac Kechichian, S.J. Ed. du Cerf, Paris 1961.

Haddan, A.W., and Stubbs, W. *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents Relating to Great Britain and Ireland*. Oxford, 1869-1878.

Hamman, Adalbert. *Patrologiae Latinae Supplementum*. Editions Garnier Freres, Paris 1958-. See also: Migne, J.P.

Heimbach, G.E., Ed. *Authenticum. Novellarum Constitutionum Iustiniani Versio Vulgata*. Leipzig 1846.

Hobeica, Joseph. See: Maron, John.

Hubner, Aemilius. *Inscriptionum Hispaniae Christianarum Supplementum*. Berlin, G. Reimer, 1900.

Ibn al-Taiyib, Abu al-Faraj Abd Allah. *Fiqh an-nasraniya*, "Das Recht der Christenheit." Edited and translated into German by Wilhelm Hoenerbach and Otto Spies. *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*, volumes 167-168, *Scriptores Arabici*, volumes 18-19.

John VI, patriarch of Armenia. *Histoire d'Arménie par le Patriarche Jean VI dit Jean Catholikos*. Translated by M.J. Saint-Martin. Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 1841.

John Scholasticus. *Ioannis Scholastici Synagoga L Titulorum*. Ed. V. Beneshevich, Akademie der Wissenschaften, Munich 1937.

Justinian. *Codex Iustinianus*, ed. Paul Krueger, in *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, Berlin 1882, Vol. II.

Kauffmann, Friedrich, Ed. *Aus der Schule des Wulfila*. Strasbourg, 1899.

Kemble, John. *Codex Diplomaticus Aevi Saxonici*. British Historical Society, London 1839.

Kraus, F.X. *Roma Sotteranea*. Freiburg 1879.

Lafontaine, Guy. *La version arménienne des oeuvres d'Aphraate le Syrien*. Louvain, 1977-1980.

Lake, Kirsopp, Ed. *The Apostolic Fathers*. Harvard University Press, 1959.

Lamy, Thomas Joseph. *Sancti Ephraemi Syri Hymni et Sermones*. Paris, 1882.

Langlois, Victor. *Collection des Historiens Anciens et Modernes de l'Arménie*. Paris, Firmin-Didot, 1880.

Latysev, V.V. *Menologii Anonymi Byzantini Saeculi X Quae Supersunt*. Petropolis, 1911.

Leabhar Imuinn. The Book of Hymns of the Ancient Church of Ireland. Ed. J. Henthorn Todd, Irish Archaeological Society, Dublin 1855.

Leloir, Louis. *Paterica Armeniaca a P.P. Mechitaristis / edita (1855) nunc latine reddita a Louis Leloir*. Louvain, 1974–1976. CSCO vol. 353, 361, 371, 379, subsidia vol. 42–43, 47, 51.

Liber Ardmachanus (The Book of Armagh). Scolar Press, Ashgate Publishing Co., 1996.

Loewenfeld, S. *Epistolae Pontificum Romanorum Ineditae*. Leipzig, 1885.

Maassen, Frederic. *Concilia Aevi Merovingici*. Societas Aperiendis Fontibus Rerum Germanicarum Medii Aevi, Hanover 1883. See: *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*.

Macarios, Georges. *Histoire de l'Eglise d'Alexandrie depuis Saint Marc jusqu'à nos jours*. Cairo, 1894.

Mansi, Archbishop John. *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio*. Florence, 1759.

Maron, John. *Le Sacerdoce, ou Première Homélie sur le Sacerdoce*. Edited and translated by J. Hobeica. Maronite Patriarchal Press, Lebanon 1912.

Maximinus [Arian bishop, c. 381]. *Dissertatio contra Ambrosium Episcopum*, in: F. Kauffmann, ed. *Aus der Schule des Wulfila*, Strasbourg 1899. Reprinted in *Patrologiae Latinae Supplementum*, Vol. I, 693–728.

Menaion... Periechon Hapasan Ten Anekousan Auto Akolouthian. Apostoliki Diakonia Tes Ekklesias Tes Hellados, Athens 1979.

Michael the Syrian, Jacobite patriarch [1166–1199]. Ed. J.B. Chabot, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien*, Leroux, Paris 1902.

Migne, J.P. *Patrologiae Cursus Completus*, Paris 1843–65.

Mkhithar of Airivank. M. Brosset, ed., *Histoire Chronologique par Mkhithar d'Airivank*. Imperial Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg 1869.

Keys Over the Christian World

Mohlberg, L.C. *Liber Sacramentorum Romanae Ecclesiae Ordinis Anni Circuli*. Rome, Herder 1960.

Mommson, Theodor, ed. *Libri Theodosiani XVI cum Constitutionibus Sirmondianis*. Berlin 1954.

Movses Dasxuranci. *The History of the Caucasian Albanians*. Translated by C.J.F. Dowsett. Oxford University Press, London 1961.

Idem. *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*. Berlin, 1892.

Idem. *Neues Archiv*, Hanover 1886.

Mone, Franz Joseph. *Hymni Latini Medii Aevi*. Herder, Freiburg 1855.

Morin, Dom Germain. *Etudes, textes, découvertes*, Maredsous 1913.

Muller, Karl. *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum*. Paris, Firmin Didot, 1873–1874.

Nau, F. *Le Livre d'Heracleide de Damas*. Letouzey et Ane, Paris, 1910.

Nennius. *Nennii Historia Brittonum*. Edited by Joseph Stevenson. London, English Historical Society, 1838. Kraus Reprint Ltd., Vaduz 1964.

Nerses Snorhali, Saint. *Sancti Nersis Clajensis Armeniorum Catholici Opera*. Ed. Joseph Cappelletti. Venice, Mekhitarist Press, 1833.

Idem. *La Complainte d'Edesse*. Translated by Isaac Kechichian, S.J. Venice 1984, Casa Editrice Armena.

Idem. *Jesus, Fils Unique du Pere*, translated by Isaac Kechichian, S.J. Editions du Cerf, 1973.

Nilles, N. *Kalendarium Manuale utriusque Ecclesiae*. Oeniponte, 1896.

O'Connor, Charles. *Rerum Hibernicarum Scriptores*. London, 1814.

Otto, bishop of Freising. *The Two Cities. A Chronicle of Universal History to the Year 1146 A.D.* Translated by C.C. Mierow. Edd. A.P. Evans and Charles Knapp. New York, Columbia University Press, 1928.

Papadopoulos-Kerameus, Athanasius. *Analekta Hierosolymitikes Stachiologias*, reprint "Culture et Civilisation," Brussels 1963.

Pargoire, Jules. *L'Eglise Byzantine de 527 a 847*. New York, Burt Franklin Reprint 1971.

Pelagius the deacon [Pope Pelagius I (556–560)]. *Pelagii Diaconi Ecclesiae Romani in Defensione Trium Capitulorum*. Edited by R. Devreesse, Vatican City, 1932. Volume 57 in the series *Studi e Testi*. Reprinted in *Patrologiae Latinae Supplementum*, Vol. IV***, 1313–1369.

Idem. *Epistolae Pelagii Papae ex Collectione Britannica*. Reprinted in *Patrologiae Latinae Supplementum*, Vol. IV***, 1284 sq.

Phillips, George, Ed. *The Doctrine of Addai the Apostle*. Trubner, London 1876.

Philosophoumena, or Refutation of all Heresies. Greek text and Latin translation. Ed. Patrick Cruice. Paris, 1870.

Philoxenus of Mabboug. *Lettre aux moines de Senoun*. Edited and translated by Andre de Halleux. Louvain, 1963. CSCO vol. 231–232, *Scriptores Syri* vol. 98–99.

Pietri, Charles. *Roma Christiana*, Rome, Ecole Francaise, 1976.

Pitra, J.B. *Analecta Sacra Spicilegio Solesmensi Parata*, Paris 1883.

Idem. *Hymnographie de l'Eglise Grecque*. Rome, 1867.

Potthast, Augustus. *Regesta Pontificum Romanorum inde ab anno post Christum natum MCXCVIII ad annum MCCCIV*. Berlin, 1874.

Priscillian. *Liber ad Damasum Episcopum*. Ed. G. Schepss, in: *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, Vol. 18. Reprinted in *Patrologiae Latinae Supplementum*, Vol. II, 1434–1441.

Raynaldi, Oderico [continuator of Baronius. See: *Baronius*].

Raynaldus, Odericus [see: *Raynaldi*].

Renaudot, Eusebe. *Historia Patriarcharum Alexandrinorum Jacobitarum*. Paris, 1713.

Rolls Series (*Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores*). See: *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and: Stokes, Whitley.

Schwartz, Eduard. *Neue Aktenstücke zum ephesensischen Konzil von 431*. Munich, 1920.

Keys Over the Christian World

Idem. *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum*. Walter de Gruyter & Co., Berlin 1928–.

Scott, Herbert. *The Eastern Churches and the Papacy*, 1928. Reprint Sheed and Ward.

Scriptores Latini Hiberniae. See: Bieler, Ludwig.

Sebeos. *Sebeos' History*. Translated by Robert Bedrosian. Sources of the Armenian Tradition, New York 1985.

Severus of Antioch. See: Brooks, E. W.

Smbat Sparapet. *La Chronique Attribué au Connétable Smbat*. Translated by Gerard Dedeyan. P. Geuthner, Paris 1980.

Stevenson, Joseph, Ed. *Venerabilis Bedae Opera Historica Minora*. English Historical Society, London 1841.

Stokes, Whitley. *The Tripartite Life of Patrick With Other Documents Relating to that Saint*. Originally published 1887, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, London. Volume 89 of *Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores* (Rolls Series).

Strauss, Peter L., Ed. *The Fetha Nagast — The Law of the Kings*. Translated by Abba Paulos Tzadua. Copyright 1968, Haile Sellassie University, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Talatinian, Basilio. *Il Primato di Pietro e del Papa nella Chiesa Armena. Centro Franciscano di Studi Orientali Cristiani*, Cairo 1960.

The Catholic Encyclopedia. Copyright 1913, The Encyclopedia Press, New York.

Thiel, Bishop Andreas. *Epistolae Romanorum pontificum genuinae et quae ad eos scriptae sunt a S. Hilario usque ad Pelagium II*, Braunsberg 1867. Reprinted 1974, Georg Olms Verlag, Hildesheim, New York.

Thompson, R. W., ed. *The Teaching of St. Gregory. An Early Armenian Catechism*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA., 1970.

Timothy I, Patriarch of the Nestorians [c. 777-820]. *Epistulae*. Edited and translated by Oskar Braun. Louvain, 1953.

Tournebize, F. *Histoire Politique et Religieuse de l'Arménie*. Paris, 1910.

Ukhtanes of Edessa. See: M. Brosset, *Deux Historiens Arméniens*.

Vacant, A. and Mangenot, E., edd. *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*. Paris, Letouzey et Ane, 1931.

Vahram of Edessa. *Vahram's Chronicle of the Armenian Kingdom in Cilicia, During the Time of the Crusades*. Translated from the original Armenian with notes and illustrations by Charles Fried Neumann. London, Oriental translation fund, 1831.

Voobus, Arthur. *The Canons Ascribed to Maruta of Maipherqat and Related Sources*. Louvain, 1982. *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*, volumes 439-440, *Scriptores Syri*, volumes 191-192.

Wadding, Luke. *Annales Minorum*. Rome 1630.

Wallis Budge, Sir E.A. *The Monks of Kublai Khan*. London, Religious Tract Society, 1928.

Wasserschleben, F.W.H. *Die Bussordnungen der abendlandischen Kirche*. Halle, 1851.

Idem. *Die Irische Kanonensammlung*. Leipzig, 1885.

Wright, William. *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts of the British Museum*. Longmans 1871.